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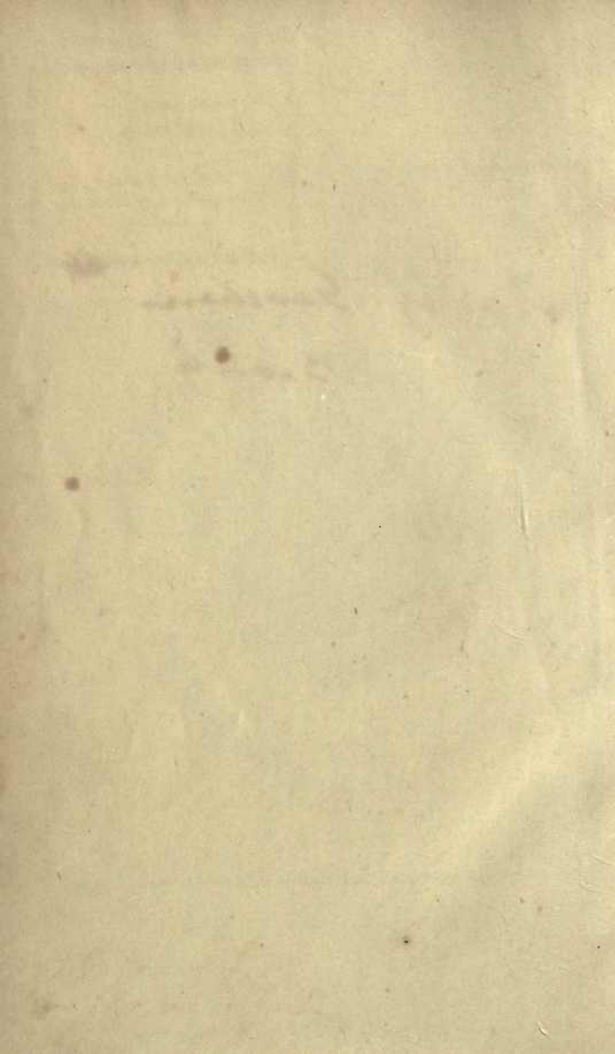
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“Once when Fhebe was standing before the glass, arranging a flower among her dark curls—” p. 74.

GRACE DERMOTT;

OR,

HOW TO LIGHTEN HEAVY BURDENS.



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GRACE DERMOTT.

CHAPTER I.

“ONLY two more hours, and aunt Alice will be here!” exclaimed Phebe Harrington, attentively examining, for the twentieth time, the little French clock which stood upon the chimney-piece, and never went at all the faster for all her impatience. “Only two more hours! I am so glad; for I do love her dearly.”

“Every one loves Alice Vernon,” said her mother, gently, “and I do not know why; unless it is for the old reason, that she loves and is kind to everybody.”

“Does aunt Alice love cross, ugly people?” asked little Willie, with an arch look, which made his sisters smile, and called up an angry flush on the pale cheek of his cousin, Grace Dermott.

“Yes, I suppose so. At any rate she will be kind to them.”

"You hear that, Grace," said the provoking boy.

"It is nothing to me," replied his cousin, rather sharply. "I do not want any one to love me."

"I should think not," replied Phebe: "by the way in which you behave. It would indeed be expecting an impossibility."

"I know it," replied Grace, "and have long since ceased to expect it, or to care about it."

"Hush, hush! We must have no quarrelling to-day," interposed Mrs. Harrington. "Willie, I have told you repeatedly not to tease your cousin. How very silly, Grace, to mind what such a child says."

"I do not mind," replied Grace, doggedly; for she was just then in one of her very worst humours. "It is all the same to me what any one says or thinks."

"Grace," said her aunt, "you had better go to your own room until tea-time. Poor thing!" added she, as the door closed; "I have no heart to reprove her. And now, children, remember, once for all, that I will not have her provoked."

"Really, mother," said her eldest daughter Caroline, "there is no speaking before Grace, of late. She takes every thing to herself,

whether we mean it or not, and her temper is unbearable."

"I do not think that she is very well to-day," said Mrs. Harrington; "and Grace never complains, you know. I must talk to Doctor Greenfield about her."

"An hour and a half!" exclaimed Phebe, returning once more to the little French clock. "How slowly the time passes!"

"It always does to the impatient," replied her mother. "I would advise you to get some employment."

Phebe brought her work, still looking up between every stitch, and throwing it down at the sound of every approaching carriage; while her sister Caroline, although possessing more self-control, was scarcely less impatient.

At an upper window, with her burning brow pressed against the glass to cool it, stood Grace Dermott: not that she cared about this new aunt Alice, whom she had never seen, but from a restless feeling of curiosity. She saw the carriage drive up; she heard the joyful welcome of her young cousins; she beheld, in imagination, the affectionate embraces given and received, and felt like an outcast and a stranger: while the consciousness how much her own evil temper had contributed to that alienation in-

creased her trouble. It grew dark, and Grace felt cold and desolate. Presently, Phebe came to summon her to tea.

“I wonder that you thought of me,” said Grace, turning away, that her cousin might not see she had been weeping. “I concluded that you would all have been too much taken up with your new aunt.”

“Why, to confess the truth, Grace, we had forgotten you, until she inquired after you; for you know she is your aunt as well as mine.”

Grace did not reply; but she lingered a moment behind her cousin, to smooth her hair, and arrange her dress as well as she could in the dim mirror. And then turning away with a sigh, murmured hopelessly, “What does it signify?” and went down stairs with a sullen and defying look. She heard Caroline say, “Here comes Grace!” and it sounded to her morbid sensibility like a mockery.

Miss Vernon drew her towards her, and kissed her affectionately. She was the first person - who had kissed Grace Dermott since her mother died!

“How cold your hands are, my dear child,” said she, still retaining them in both of hers.

“Yes,—there is no fire up-stairs.”

“And what made you sit there all alone?”

“ Grace likes to be alone,” said Willie ;
“ and then she cannot quarrel with any one.”

“ No, it was not that,” replied the girl, firmly. “ Mrs. Harrington desired me to remain in my own room until tea-time. But Willie is right, for I do like best to be alone.”

“ And then you read, I suppose,” continued Miss Vernon.

“ Yes, sometimes ; but I generally think.”

“ I should like to know what you think about,” said Phebe, laughingly.

“ No, you would not !” replied her cousin, abruptly, while her eyes flashed, and the thin hand, which Miss Vernon still held, trembled strangely.

“ Sit down, Grace,” interrupted Mrs. Harrington, putting her gently on one side, for she feared some passionate outbreak ; “ and let us have some tea, for aunt Alice must be tired.”

Grace sat down in her accustomed place, and spoke no more that evening. She thought herself unobserved, and uncared for ; but there was one whose glance of tender compassion rested continually upon her pale countenance—one who prayed that night for the poor girl, who, painfully conscious of the sins of her own heart, dared not pray for herself. Not but that there was family prayer every

night, when Grace kneeled down with the rest ; but somehow she thought that what was said seemed to be intended for every one but her. And there was no one to talk of or explain it to her afterwards.

Mrs. Harrington was perpetually telling her about her passionate temper, and how wicked it was to give way to it as she did ; and Grace felt the truth of her reproof. She had tried many times to grow better, and failed.

“It is of no use,” thought she ; “and there is no hope for me either in heaven or on earth !” And so her heart grew cold and hardened.



CHAPTER II.

GRACE DERMOTT had the misfortune to lose her mother when she was very young ; and many years afterwards her father died also, leaving her under the guardianship of her uncle, Mr. Harrington. Mr. Dermott was a stern, worldly man ; and thought, by securing an ample fortune for his helpless and motherless child, he had done all that was required of him. His last illness was sudden and severe. Grace pleaded hard to be admitted into the sick-room, but was refused. “ Poor thing ! ” said her aunt, “ she could do no good, and might do harm. The sound of her crutch, together with her wild, uncontrollable grief, would only serve to agitate him.” It was in vain that Grace promised to be calm and still—so still that her father should not even know that she was there. Mrs. Harrington would not hear of such a thing, and her refusal was meant in kindness to both, although bitterly resented by the helpless girl.

As soon as Grace heard that her father was in actual danger, she dragged herself up stairs noiselessly, and without her crutch, although suffering greatly from the exertion ; and sit-

ting down on the mat, outside of his chamber door, refused to stir, and threatened to scream aloud if any one attempted to remove her. Mrs. Harrington, seeing that resistance was in vain, ordered the child to be brought in, and placed on the couch by her father's bedside, where she remained until he died, uttering no passionate lament, shedding no tear, and only dropping to sleep when utterly exhausted.

Mr. Dermott had never asked for her; and Grace feared to draw aside the curtain and speak, lest he should banish her from his presence; for he had never been an affectionate parent, and yet he was her father for all that. A few hours before he died, Grace heard him ask Mrs. Harrington to be kind to his poor, motherless girl.

"You will have some trouble with her," said he, "for they complain to me that her temper is unbearable. But that, I fear, is my fault, and the necessary consequence of my own neglect."

Grace could restrain herself no longer, and kneeling down by the bedside, and speaking gently, for fear of agitating him, she said in a low voice—

"No, dear father, it is not your fault. You always told me to be a good girl. It is I only who am to blame."

"My poor Grace!" said the sick man, lay-

ing his hand kindly upon her bowed head;
“My poor, unhappy Grace!”

“No! happy, happy, if you will only live,
father; if you will only love me!”

“It is too late,” said Mr. Dermott, faintly.

“I will be so good, father; indeed I will!”

“Take her away,” said the dying man; “she
wearies me.”

Obedient to a warning glance from Mrs. Harrington, Grace kissed her father’s hand without another word. She suffered the nurse to lift her up, but refused to be carried further than her own little couch, where she immediately fainted away with pain and excitement. They were all, however, too busy to notice her; and Grace recovered, only to the fearful consciousness that she was now indeed an orphan. A severe attack of fever followed, and for many days her life was despaired of; during which Mrs. Harrington watched over her with pitying tenderness.

“Poor thing!” said the nurse, in a low voice, as they sat together in that darkened room. “It would be a mercy if it would please God to take her.”

“But she was not always thus,” observed Mrs. Harrington.

“Oh no, ma’am; I can remember Miss

Grace when she was as healthy and sweet-tempered a child as ever lived. It was all owing to the carelessness of the servant who had the charge of her that she was run over, and crippled as you see. And now the constant use of the crutch has made her shoulder grow out of place. Her poor father had the best advice for her, but it does not appear that any thing can be done. Since her mother's death she has been very much alone, and I dare say she frets a great deal."

"It will do her good to be with other children," said Mrs. Harrington.

"Yes, ma'am, very probably—if she lives, that is. But I have my doubts, poor thing."

Grace remained quite still in her little bed, and overheard all that passed. "Oh! if it would—if it would but please God to take me to himself!" murmured she, with clasped hands and streaming eyes.

Presently Mrs. Harrington approached, to give her some cooling medicine, and was pleased to find that the fever had abated. "You are better, my child," said she.

"I do not want to be better!" exclaimed Grace, passionately. "I want to die."

"Hush, hush!" replied her aunt, soothingly, and fearing to have her excited. "Take your medicine, Grace, and then lie down and try to

sleep." Grace was too weak to resist, and from that time she slowly recovered.

As soon as the funeral of her father was over, and the orphan could be removed with safety, Mrs. Harrington took her home, in hopes that change of scene and the society of young people of her own age might be of service in restoring her health and cheerfulness.

At first, all her cousins pitied Grace very much, and were ready to make every allowance for her grief, and to overlook what they called her sullen manner, which was, in fact, more shyness than any thing else, together with a painful consciousness of the contrast, both mental and personal, between herself and them. For her education had been sadly neglected; so that Phebe only spoke the truth when she declared that her cousin Grace was as ignorant of what she ought to know as any little child.

"Would you believe it, mother, she cannot understand a word of French; so Caroline and I speak in that language when we have any thing to say that we do not want her to hear."

"Perhaps she has never had any one to teach her," said Mrs. Harrington.

"No, mother, she never has; nor music either, although she is very fond of it."

"Then it is not her fault, you see."

"But she need not be so proud and cross."

"I think it is you who are cross now, Phebe."

Thus it was that Mrs. Harrington always received any complaint against her niece. If the other children did wrong, she punished them for it; but Grace was never punished, let her do what she would, beyond being sent, perhaps, for a few hours, to her own apartment; and then her kind but injudicious protectress was sure to endeavour to make amends for it by some little indulgence.

"One would really think," observed Mr. Harrington, impatiently, on being witness to an occasion of this sort, "that you loved this orphan girl better than your own children."

"On the contrary," replied his wife, gently, "I am afraid that I do not love her at all; in fact it is impossible for any one to love Grace Dermott: but I pity her very much. Poor child! she is her own enemy, and, as you say, an orphan and alone in the world."

Grace was sitting in the next room, and heard every thing that passed. There was one sentence that haunted her continually: "*It is impossible for any one to love Grace Dermott.*" The little influence which Mrs. Harrington had hitherto possessed over the wayward girl ceased from that hour.

CHAPTER III.

MRS. HARRINGTON'S family consisted of two sons and two daughters. At the time of which we write, Robert, the eldest, (to the great relief of his cousin,) was absent at college. He was a fine, high-spirited youth, thoughtless rather than ill-natured, and the undaunted protector, as well as the incorrigible tormentor, of poor Grace. Nothing pleased him better than to see her in one of those fits of passion which were, alas ! far too easily excited ; or to provoke the ready sneer and sarcastic reply with which she was ever prepared to resent, and even to anticipate, the attack of her cousins. But had Grace shed one tear, he would have been all sorrow and remorse in a moment. Once, when one of his schoolfellows, a head taller than himself, attempted to ridicule the poor girl's awkward gait, Robert was ready to avenge the wrong ; and yet, that same evening, he wounded her feelings far more himself by his thoughtless remarks.

Caroline, the next eldest, inherited much of her mother's disposition. She was seldom or

never in ill-humour; but then, to be sure, she had nothing to try her temper, and was blessed with unbroken health and a cheerful spirit: for we all know that health and cheerfulness are as much God's gifts as food and raiment. Caroline had but little sympathy for those who were differently constituted; and did not hesitate to think and call her cousin Grace a very wicked girl, for going into a passion, as she did, about every little trifle.

Phebe, with a warmer and more affectionate disposition than her sister, had less control over herself, and frequently did and said things for which she was very sorry afterwards. Willie, the youngest, was a spoiled child, and the pet and plaything of the whole family. In imitation of his favourite, Robert, nothing pleased him so well as teasing poor Grace; especially when he saw that even his mother could not at times forbear smiling, while she told her how silly it was to mind what such a child said. And when she scolded at him for it, the little fellow was very apt to remember the smile and forget the scolding.

It was nearly three years since Miss Vernon had visited her sister, having been abroad. She had never seen Grace, in consequence of a coolness existing between Mr. Dermott and his

wife's family, for, as we have said, he was a strange and stern man; but even before they met she loved her for her mother's sake. Many people would have been chilled and disgusted by the girl's awkward appearance, unprepossessing countenance, and repulsive manner; but Miss Vernon felt only that she was unhappy and suffering. She marked how Grace seemed by turns timid and arrogant, and saw that the one was half assumed to hide the other; how patient she was under bodily affliction, being too proud to complain; how haughty and irritable at the slightest provocation, partly in consequence of ill-health and the over-excited state of her nerves. She saw, too, how Mrs. Harrington's kindly-meant indulgence and withholding of all punishment made her reckless and overbearing, and won for her the envy and ill-will of her less fortunate cousins.

"Poor thing," said Mrs. Harrington, when her sister spoke to her on the subject; "what can I do? I have no heart to correct her. I am sure I talk to her enough. But as for punishing her, I would not add one feather's weight, if I could help it, to the heavy affliction with which it has pleased God to visit her."

"But you might help her to endure it."

“Poor Grace! she is so sensitive that I would not speak to her on the subject for the world.”

“And so, out of false kindness, my dear sister, you leave her to bear this terrible burden alone; for I fear that she has yet to learn the sweet comfort of casting all her care upon Him who careth for us.”

“She always attends church with Caroline and Phebe,” said Mrs. Harrington, evasively, “except in the very warm weather, and then the heat makes her ill, or when she complains that it gives her a pain in the side to sit so long in one position; or if they happen to be late—for Grace never will go into church late, for fear of being noticed.”

“And does not this last arise partly from pride?”

“Very likely; but then it is so natural, poor child! and we must not judge her as we would other people.”

“God forbid that I should judge any one, and assuredly not a poor, afflicted thing like Grace Dermott, and the only child of my dear, lost sister!” replied Miss Vernon, earnestly; “but, nevertheless, I would not shrink from pointing out her faults, if I could hope thereby

to make her better and happier, and teach her to amend them."

"I have tried that," said Mrs. Harrington, "but it is of no use: and I do think that speaking to her only makes her worse, and that she is best when let alone."

"And what will become of her when she grows up?"

"I do not believe that Grace will live to grow up; and it is that which makes me pity and bear with her."

"And if she dies," said Miss Vernon, with much emotion, "what then, sister?"

Mrs. Harrington was silent for a few moments, and then said, "Is God less compassionate than man?"

"The Scriptures say," replied her companion, "that 'God is a consuming fire,'* that is, without Christ."

"You always understood a great deal more about these things than I did, my dear Alice," said her sister, gently; "and I am sure I shall be glad if you will talk to Grace. The poor girl does not want intelligence. Her progress in music is wonderful, and she already knows nearly as much French as Phebe, and draws

* Heb. xii. 29.

better ; but then she studies very hard, harder than is good for her own health ; but she will do it."

"She does not appear to me to take exercise enough."

"So I tell her ; but she never will go out with the girls, except, indeed, when we are in the country ; and I do not like to insist upon it."

"It would have been better for her own sake if you had done so," observed Miss Vernon. "This unlimited indulgence will be the ruin of the poor child's health and temper. In all probability she had been sadly neglected since her mother's death."

"Yes, the nurse told me as much ; and when she first came to me she actually knew nothing."

"How long has she been with you ?" asked Miss Vernon.

"Nearly three years. Her poor father died just after you went abroad."

"Yes, I remember now. It must have been a sad death-bed."

"He died very peacefully," said Mrs. Harrington.

"Do you remember the death of our dear Grace ?"

"Oh yes ; how good she was ?"

“Nevertheless, she did not die trusting in her own goodness, but in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Never shall I forget her earnest prayers for her helpless babe, and her strong faith in Him to whom she confided her then absent darling.”

“She was an angel,” said Mrs. Harrington, weeping, “if ever there was one on earth.”

“Or rather a child of God, sanctified and redeemed by Divine grace: and it is that same grace which can alone save our unhappy orphan.”

“As I said before, you know more of these things than I do, and I sincerely hope that your visit here may be a blessing to the poor girl. But I must own that I have my doubts whether she will ever be like other people.”

“She certainly never will in appearance; but this lame child is, nevertheless, as precious in God’s sight as either you or I, and nothing is impossible with him.”

“Very true,” said Mrs. Harrington, meekly, as her companion turned away; and she wished in her heart that she was half as good as her sister Alice. “But then, to be sure,” argued she, “she has nothing else to do but read her Bible and visit the poor. It is different with those who have a family to look after.”

CHAPTER IV.

THE proficiency which Grace had made in the French language led to her hearing and understanding many things which were never meant to reach her ear; little things, spoken hastily and thoughtlessly, but which the poor girl was slow to forget. Being much alone, she used to sit and brood over them until they appeared worse than they really were, and engendered, together with much personal mortification, a bitter feeling of resentment against others. Sometimes Mrs. Harrington insisted upon her accompanying her cousins in their visits to their young friends; upon which occasions her excessive timidity gave a constraint to her manners, which many mistook for sullenness or pride; and all agreed in saying—"What a disagreeable girl Grace Dermott is!" Frequently she never spoke a word; and on her return she used to retire to her own apartment, and weep with shame and mortification.

It generally happened, however, that Mrs. Harrington yielded to her passionate desire for solitude; and even then Grace wasted and em-

bittered the luxury which she had so earnestly coveted, by her sad and vain regrets. A morbid and exaggerated consciousness of her own deformity, of her evil temper, and lonely and loveless existence, weighed on the mind of the unhappy girl, and poisoned the springs of life. Waking or sleeping, the theme was ever the same. It would have been an inexpressible relief to have unburdened her full heart to some sympathizing friend; to have laid her weary head upon some kind bosom, and listened to those hopeful and encouraging words which are like balm to the sad and suffering spirit. But Grace had no real friend; and she knew that full well, and that it was in a great measure her own fault. She felt that she had alienated them all, and tried not to care; but it is a melancholy thing to be alone in the world!

One night, soon after her arrival, Mrs. Harrington was awakened by her passionate weeping; for Grace slept at that time in a little room within her own; and slipping on her dressing gown, she went to see what was the matter.

“Are you ill, Grace?” she asked.

“No; but I have had a beautiful dream.”

“And does that make you weep?”

"I could not help it, indeed ; for I dreamed that I was like other children. And then, when I awoke and found that it was not true, I wept."

"Silly child !" said Mrs. Harrington ; and Grace could not see the compassionate tears that filled her eyes. Her little heart, full almost to bursting, was thrown back upon itself in the very moment of confidence, and chilled into silence and restraint.

"There, do not cry any more," added her aunt ; "but go to sleep like a good girl."

Grace ceased her sobs at once, and lay quite still ; so still that Mrs. Harrington was not afterwards disturbed : but she slept no more that night. What a long night it seemed, and how dark every thing was, both within and without, to the unhappy girl, as she lay counting the hours ! How well did she realize the touching language of holy writ, "In the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even ! and at even, Would God it were morning !"

Mrs. Harrington was invariably kind and indulgent to her young niece, perhaps too indulgent : but it was in act rather than manner ; and Grace was sensitively alive to the difference. She took care that she was provided with every thing necessary to her health and

bodily comfort, and when she was ill, (which but too frequently happened,) was watchful and attentive; but no caressing finger parted the hair upon her feverish brow, no lip imprinted upon it a loving kiss, no one smiled and blessed God when the danger was over. Mrs. Harrington said, (and she spoke the truth when she said it,) "I am glad that you are better, Grace," and her face was pale with watching; but she stood afar off, and her voice was cold.

Weak and subdued by illness, Grace frequently apologized for giving so much trouble; but the propitious moment for making any impression on her softened heart, by inviting its confidence, receiving its penitent confessions, and strengthening its good resolutions, was suffered to pass away. Those who knew Mrs. Harrington best, recognised the natural kind disposition of her heart under its habitual cold exterior; but Grace, wrapped up as she was in her own morbid selfishness, her own passionate yearnings after affection and sympathy, was very slow to understand the real character of her protectress.

It is natural to feel a sort of deference for the afflicted; but the careful avoidance of all mention of that affliction proceeds from a false and cruel delicacy. The very depth and inten-

sity with which Grace felt and suffered, prevented her from unburdening her mind to any living soul, unless allured and encouraged so to do. Her's was a grief over which action had no power ; while a few kind words would have soothed, alleviated, and helped her to endure it ; more especially if they had led her to Him who endured so much for us. Instead of which, she grew up lonely and repining ; injured in health, depressed in spirits, irritable in temper, and a burden to herself and every one around her. It was a hard lot ; and those who should have soothed and sympathized with her only laughed and made light of it.

“ If Grace is lame,” Phebe would sometimes say, “ it is no reason why she should be so cross.” It was no reason, certainly ; and yet one was in no small degree the consequence of the other. The sin was undoubtedly great ; but so also was the temptation : and while hating and rebuking the former, Phebe should have remembered to pity, and have endeavoured, as far as lay in her power, to lessen and remove the latter. It is always well, when we feel indignant with others, to try and imagine ourselves placed for a moment in the same situation ; although we never can realize, by these means, one-half of its peculiar trials,

for "the heart knoweth his own bitterness." If the active, merry-hearted Phebe, or the calm, immovable Caroline, happy and self-possessed, in the pride of youth, and blessed with parents, friends, and unbroken health, could have felt, but for a few moments, what Grace continually experienced—her deep mental agony ; her shrinking timidity, which hid itself under the garb of pride and indifference ; the weary bodily pain that never left her for long together ; her vain yearnings for their love ; her bitter self-accusings—how full of tenderness and compassion they would have felt towards her ever after !

But God seeth not as man seeth. "We have not a High-Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities ; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.—Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." *

Poor Grace had yet to learn this sweet and comforting truth.

* Heb. iv. 15 ; vii. 25.

CHAPTER V.

MISS VERNON was neither young, nor beautiful, nor rich: and yet, as Mrs. Harrington had said, everybody loved her; and for the very reason which she mentioned, that she loved and was kind to everybody; for *to be beloved, we must love*. Grace Dermott felt the influence of her firm yet gentle manner. Perhaps, unknown to herself, she had a secret wish to please one who always looked and spoke so kindly to her, and was therefore more on her guard, and less irritable and passionate than usual; nor were her cousins quite so provoking. Phebe would frequently stop short in what she was saying, when she caught the mild reproof of aunt Alice's countenance. And even little Willie left off teasing Grace, to twine his arms lovingly about the neck of this dear relative, and kiss her until she smiled upon him.

One morning, when Miss Vernon was in great haste to tie up a parcel, for which some friends were waiting, she asked Grace to bring her scissors from the next room.

“Phebe will go quicker than I can,” said Grace, in a low voice, and without attempting to move.

“How ill-natured, when your aunt is in such a hurry,” observed Caroline, as her sister left the room. “But it is just like you. It was too much trouble, of course.”

“No it was not that,” said Grace.

“Then what was the reason, pray?”

“Because—because I did not choose!” and she fixed her flashing eyes with a look of defiance upon her cousin, who shrugged up her shoulders, and turned away with a glance of mingled scorn and pity.

Some hours afterwards, when Caroline and her sister had gone out for their morning walk, and Miss Vernon was left alone with Grace, she called her to her, and putting her arm round her waist, said, gently—“My dear Grace, I was wrong this morning in asking you to bring my scissors, when, as you said, Phebe could have gone so much quicker, and perhaps it is painful for you to move; but I was in such haste, I scarcely knew whom I addressed. Will you forgive me?”

“Forgive you! O aunt! It is I who ought to ask forgiveness for being so cross and ill-natured, instead of going directly. And

yet it was not ill-nature either that prevented me ; nor was it because it is always painful for me to move, for I am used to that : but"—Grace hesitated. Miss Vernon did not speak, but she drew her closer to her, and kissed her forehead ; while Grace, subdued by her affectionate caresses, hid her face in her bosom, as she added, in a whisper—"The reason I refused to do what you desired, was, because I knew that Phebe would say something, as she always does, when I cross the room ;—because I felt how awkward I was, and how unlike other people."

"But your lameness is no fault of yours, my poor child."

"No," exclaimed Grace, passionately ; "it was all owing to the carelessness of that Ann Harvey, my nurse. How I hate her very name !"

"It was God's will," said Miss Vernon, calmly, and without noticing this outburst of anger and resentment ; "and whatever he wills is in love, and is best for us."

"God does not love me," continued Grace, with bitterness, "or he would have made me like other girls. He cannot love me, because I am so impatient, and so wicked and sinful. It is the good only whom God loves."

"And who are the good ?"

“Not my cousins, certainly !” was the quick and vindictive reply ; for they are bad themselves, and make me worse. But I think that you are good ; and I am sure that you are very kind and gentle.”

“Grace,” said her aunt, gravely, “we read in the Scriptures that ‘*all* have sinned, and come short of the glory of God ;—that there is none righteous, no *not one* : there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God ; they are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable ; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.’ ”

“But some may be worse than others, I suppose,” said Grace, in a low voice.

Again Miss Vernon opened her little Bible, and read the fifteenth verse of the first chapter of Paul’s first Epistle to Timothy, “ ‘This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners ; of whom I am chief.’ ”

“O aunt ! is that really in the Bible ?” asked Grace, earnestly, and with the tears in her eyes.

“You can see for yourself, Grace ; and I will give you the book for your own, if you will promise me to read it diligently and prayerfully.”

"I should like it very much," said Grace, "but I cannot promise. Caroline says it is only a mockery for me to read the Bible; so I gave it up. I hear it read in church, but it never seems to be meant for me."

"The Bible," replied Miss Vernon, gently, "is God's loving message to poor sinners, even the chief."

"Then I may read it without mockery," said Grace; "may I not?"

"If you feel yourself to be a sinner, my child, and are grieved at sin, it is your's; not only is the Bible your's, but also all the blessed promises which it contains."

Grace received the book with joy, carefully marking the passage which her aunt had read.

"How very kind you are to me!" said she, gratefully.

"And now, in return," replied Miss Vernon, smiling, "I want you to walk a little way with me. It will do you good, and I dislike walking alone."

"Are you going to make any calls, aunt Alice?" asked Grace, timidly.

"Why, my dear?"

"Never mind, I will go with you whether you are or not," replied Grace.

Miss Vernon did not, however, pay any vis-

its that morning ; but they had a pleasant walk together, not long enough to tire either of them, and rendered still shorter by cheerful conversation.

“ I like walking with you,” said Grace, frankly ; “ and I like hearing you talk. It makes me forget every thing else.”

“ And I like having you with me, my dear Grace, when you are gentle and good-humoured.”

“ I am sure I wish that I could always be good-humoured ; and have tried often and often, but it is of no use.”

“ But have you asked God to help you ?”

“ No, aunt, I cannot say that I have.”

“ I know,” said Miss Vernon, “ that it is very difficult when one is not quite well, or in pain, to avoid being irritable and impatient. I have felt it very frequently myself. And the more difficult it is, the more we need divine strength and assistance.”

“ O aunt Alice ! do you really feel cross sometimes ?”

“ Yes, indeed, my dear Grace ; and then I lift up my heart secretly to God, and he helps me to conquer my evil temper. Or if I do not quite conquer it, I go to him in the name of Jesus Christ, and ask forgiveness for my sinful impatience.”

“And will God help and forgive me also?”

“You have his own promise that he will. You may read it in the sixteenth chapter of John’s Gospel: ‘Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name; ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.’ These words, we are told, were not merely addressed to the disciples, but to all who should believe on him through their report:—all believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.”

“O aunt, it seems to me I should like to believe, if I might.”

“We are not only permitted, but commanded to do so. But I do not think that you quite understand what is meant by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ.”

“I am afraid not,” replied Grace, meekly and sorrowfully.

“You must read your Bible and pray to the Holy Spirit to teach and lead you into all truth. Do you ever pray, Grace?”

“I cannot say that I do. I dare not.”

“My poor child! this is sad indeed.” And Miss Vernon’s eyes filled with tears.

“Do not weep,” sobbed Grace, whose heart melted at the sight of her tears. “Do not weep

for me, my dear aunt. I will try to be better, indeed I will; and pray, and ask God to help me, if you think that it will not be wicked and seem like mocking God, and that he will hear me."

"Have you forgotten the Saviour's words so soon, 'Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you?'"

"Then I will ask him to make me a good girl, for Jesus Christ's sake!" exclaimed Grace, eagerly. "Is that right? And will he really do it?"

Miss Vernon turned again to the little Bible, for she well knew that there is nothing like God's own word; and read aloud the beautiful promise contained in the thirty-sixth chapter of Ezekiel, and the twenty-sixth verse: "'A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.'"

"Yes, that is just what I want," said Grace, "A NEW HEART. I have often thought that mine was like a heart of stone; for nothing seemed to touch or melt it. What a treasure have you given me, my dear aunt, in this little book!"

"May God, in his infinite mercy, make it

yours," replied Miss Vernon, kissing her affectionately.

That was a bright day for poor Grace. It is a bright day for us all when the Sun of righteousness first begins to arise and shine upon our hearts, although it may be long before the mists of sin and doubt and unbelief are dispelled, and we begin to feel the "healing in his wings."



CHAPTER VI.

GRACE now diligently read her little Bible, morning and evening, applying to her kind aunt whenever she met with any thing that puzzled her. Her aunt never failed to lift up her heart in secret prayer to the Holy Spirit before she ventured to reply to her many questions. Nor did she ever read, either with her or alone, without remembering to supplicate that blessed illumination from above, without which all human reasoning will profit nothing. Often and often, but for her encouragement, Grace would have again given up all hope; for she was weary of endeavouring to be good, as she called it, and tempted to utter despair. Although Grace tried to believe, her faith was very imperfect; and she could not comprehend (as yet) the free love of Christ, which bids us approach him just as we are, and be forgiven, and healed, and strengthened for the time to come. She thought she must wait until she grew better. Many thousands have done, and are perhaps doing, the same thing; mistaking self-righteousness for humility, and pride for contrition;

thinking to mix up their own imperfect works with the finished work of Christ; trusting to their penitence and their tears, instead of relying wholly on their Redeemer. Oh, if they would but come at once to Christ, what hours, and days, and years of misery might be saved! For we never can grow better until then, nor do any work acceptable in the sight of God. Even our very sighs, and tears, and prayers are unavailing but through a Saviour's mediation; and must be offered up in his name alone.

It is undoubtedly very difficult for the carnal mind, measuring things by this narrow standard, its own selfish requirements and limited ideas, to realize all at once the wonderful love of God the Saviour. But let us at such times exclaim, humbly, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." Because it is written in thy holy book, I try to believe it as well as I can. Do thou, Lord, the rest, that it may be all thine own work from beginning to end."

Grace soon discovered how much easier it is to lose than to regain affection once forfeited. Her cousins still pitied, but they had ceased to love or care about her. She had once shunned them, and now they shunned and avoided her: as Caroline said, "It was the best way, and then they could not quarrel." They had no subjects

of interest in common. Grace did not know any of their young friends; she had refused to visit them, and was shy and reserved when they came—a reserve which passed for pride; while they knew her only through the report of her cousins, and cared not to cultivate a more intimate acquaintance. She seldom accompanied them in their walks; she had surpassed them in their studies, and triumphed over them by her power. She was not strong enough to join in their amusements, and had yet to learn to be happy in seeing or making others so. Even little Willie shrank from her advances, and told her that “he hated cross, ugly people.” But then Grace had never tried to win the little fellow’s affections, but was continually scolding at him for making such a noise, and declaring that it nearly distracted her.

Miss Vernon talked to her nieces in private about poor Grace, and asked them to help her to keep her good resolutions. She did not make any excuses for her, or attempt to palliate her former conduct. But she endeavoured to make them feel and comprehend her manifold trials and temptations, and how very apt ill-health and constant suffering are to make people irritable and impatient. To all of this they listened respectfully, saying to one an-

other afterwards, "It is very good in dear aunt Alice to interest herself about Grace, and just like her; but she does not know her as well as we do, or see so much of her temper."

"But then, to be sure," added Phebe, "she always speaks gently to her; and never says or does any thing to provoke her, as I am afraid we often do."

"But where is the merit of being good-tempered if there is nothing to put you out?" asked Caroline. "I am sure I should be ashamed to show such passion as Grace does, and yet she frequently gives me provocation enough. And as for her ill-health, we all know that aunt Alice herself, although she seldom complains, is never well; and yet she is not cross. I only hope that she may do something with Grace; and if she does not, no one else ever will: but I confess, for my own part, that I doubt it."

"And so do I," said Phebe, "and so does mother, for I heard her say so."

Miss Vernon did not confine her religious instructions to Grace; or fancy that she wanted it more than her cousins, who read their Bible morning and night, went regularly to church, and had a head-knowledge of all that is necessary for salvation. But tried to give them, or

rather lead them—for it is the gift of God—to that *heart-knowledge* which can alone bring the blessed truths of the gospel to bear upon our actions and our lives. We are told, in the Scriptures, that “the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.” Caroline and Phebe had the letter indeed, but they wanted the spirit; and thought that they knew all things, when as yet they knew nothing as they ought. In the spirit of the Pharisee, they stood and prayed thus: “God, I thank thee that I am not as others—impatient, passionate, unjust; that I am not like my cousin Grace. I go regularly to church; I read my Bible daily; I sometimes give away to the poor.” We hope Grace was now inclined to imitate the Publican, who stood afar off, and would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, “God be merciful to me a sinner!” We are told, in the beautiful Scripture narrative, that he “went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”

Very often when Caroline and Phebe were conversing cheerfully with their young friends, or with one another, Grace sat at a distance, gloomy and deserted, and trying not to feel

sullen ; forcing back her tears, and hiding the proud swellings of her aching heart beneath a calm and even smiling exterior. No one spoke to her. She was shut out from among them. She had shut herself out ; and now she would fain have opened the door of communication, but could not.

The presence of her aunt was a great blessing to her at such times. It is sweet to have an earthly friend who will pity, while witnessing our struggles to do right ; and to whose face we can lift up our tearful eyes in loving confidence, as much as to say, "See how I bear it !" and be sure of pity and sympathy. But it is sweeter far to have a heavenly Friend, to whom we may lift up our hearts at all times and in all places, secure not only of sympathy, but of aid and strength. How happy Grace was when her kind aunt smiled approvingly upon her ! How peaceful is the heart of the believer, beneath the loving smiles of a pitying Father, as he sees them reflected in the face of Jesus Christ ! Her aunt, however, could not be always with her. But God has said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Human affection, even the very best and purest, is but as a broken cistern, compared with the divine fountain of the Saviour's love.

Frequently Grace stole out of the room, provoked by the earnest talk and merry laugh in which she held no share, and retired to her own chamber to weep. Alas! that she did not always remember to pray, for then she might have been comforted. As the door closed, she fancied that their laughter seemed lighter and louder, as though they were glad to be released from the burden of her presence. And perhaps they were; for strangers often felt it a restraint to see her sitting there so silent and hopeless and sad; or marked, if they noticed her sufficiently, the flushing of her cheek, and the sudden lighting up of her large, dark eyes, at any real or fancied allusion to herself.

Miss Vernon alone guessed what was in her heart. Upon one occasion she followed her up-stairs, and paused a moment as she heard the passionate sobs and cries of the unhappy child. How often had the petition of her childhood been sent up—"Oh that it would please God to take me to himself!" But the Being whom she thus thoughtlessly addressed was far more merciful to her than she was to herself.

"I have no father," sobbed the unhappy girl, "no mother! In all the world there is

no one to love or care for me, or miss me if I were gone. Would to God that I were dead !”

Miss Vernon had entered unperceived, and stood beside her.

“ Grace !” exclaimed she, much shocked.

Grace rose up, in evident surprise and confusion, to receive her.

“ I had forgotten my kind aunt,” said she ; “ but even you I shall tire out in time. I know—I feel that it is impossible for any one to love me.”

“ And whose fault is it, Grace, if it be so ?”

“ My own ; it is all my own fault ; but I cannot help it. I am only a trouble and a grief even to those who are most kind to me. My life is a burden. As my nurse once told Mrs. Harrington, and I have never forgotten her words, it would be a mercy if it pleased God to take me out of the world.

“ Do you think that you are fit to die ?”

“ No, and I never shall be ; it cannot be worse than it is.”

“ You never will in yourself, nor will any of us ; and therefore it was that Christ died, ‘ the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.’ But you are not well, my poor child.”

“ I am never well ; but no one cares for me, no one pities me. It is a weary life.”

“God pities you,” said Miss Vernon. “Jesus loves and cares for you. Lie down now and rest, and by and by we will talk a little.”

She threw herself upon the bed, and her aunt sat watching her, with the deepest compassion, as she lay with closed eyes and a flushed countenance; or listened to the deep sobs which continued at intervals to convulse her exhausted frame, until presently a smile passed over her face, and she fell asleep. Was that smile the effect of those three comforting words—“Jesus loves you?”

Perhaps it was.



CHAPTER VII.

WHEN Grace opened her weary eyes, more than an hour afterwards, she found Miss Vernon still watching over her. She felt grateful, even without knowing the extent of her compassionate tenderness and fervent prayers.

“How kind you are to me!” said Grace, kissing the hand which she held clasped in her’s; and a tear fell on it as she did so.

“Because I love you, Grace, and would fain help and comfort you.”

“You have been a great comfort to me, my dear aunt; indeed you have. I had not a friend in the world until you came.”

“And yet my sister is very good to you.”

“Yes,” said Grace; “she speaks and acts kindly; except once, when she told my uncle that she thought it impossible for any one to love such a one as I am. But then, to be sure, she did not know that I was so near and heard her. But she never kissed me, or called me her ‘dear child,’ as you do.”

“There are different ways of showing affec-

tion," said Miss Vernon. "Some people never show half as much as they feel."

"Then how are others to know it?" asked Grace. "I like your way best. Your first kiss seemed to unlock my heart at once."

"And yet just now you doubted my affection for you."

"I doubt every thing, I am afraid," said Grace, sorrowfully. "Pray, forgive me."

"It is God's forgiveness which you need to supplicate, my dear child."

"O aunt! I am always doing that, and asking him to break my stony heart, or take it away, as he promises; instead of which it gets harder and harder."

"You must not say that, my dear Grace. Remember that even the wish to amend proceeds from God; for we cannot of ourselves think even a good thought; and He who has put that wish and that prayer into your mind will fulfil it in his own good time and way."

Miss Vernon then opened her little Bible, and read the fifty-fifth chapter of Isaiah, beginning with that beautiful invitation—"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters," showing its freeness, "without money and without price,"—"an everlasting covenant" which he would make with such, "even the

sure mercies of David," the power of Christ and his pardoning love; and ending with the gracious promise, "My word that goeth forth out of my mouth shall not return unto me void; but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off."

"Do you understand this beautiful allegory, my dear Grace?"

"I think I do," said Grace. "I am sure that I may well be compared to a thorn or a brier, standing alone, and wounding all who venture to approach. But will there ever be joy and peace, and singing for me?"

"God giveth his sweetest songs in the night," replied her aunt; "that is, he gives the strongest consolation with the greatest affliction. I believe that through his mercy you will yet be enabled to exclaim, with Ephraim, 'I am like a green fir tree.' Do you remember the passage to which I allude?"

“No,” replied Grace. “Will you repeat it for me?”

“It is in Hosea,” said Miss Vernon. “And ‘Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols? I have heard him, and observed him; I am like a green fir tree. From me is thy fruit found.’ When you realize this blessed promise, my child, you must never forget the warning with which it concludes: *‘From me is thy fruit found!’* ‘As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine,’ said the Saviour to his disciples, ‘and ye are the branches; he that abideth in me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.’ Without Christ, we can do nothing.”

“Does not fruit mean good works, aunt?”

“Yes, my dear; good works proceeding from faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and done out of love to him and for his glory.”

“What can I ever do?” asked Grace, despairingly;—“lame, helpless, despised, and unable even to assist myself.”

“But we may suffer as well as do his will, my dear Grace. God may be glorified in active service, or in patient waiting; in health,

or in sickness, and even upon a dying bed. I knew a poor girl once who was confined to her bed for many years before she died, and unable to move a limb: but love for Christ, and a remembrance of all that he had done and suffered for her, rendered her meek and uncomplaining and sweet tempered; by which means she constantly recommended to others the religion which she professed, and manifested its soothing power in the season of trial. Some have glorified him at the stake; but many more, of whom the world never heard, have glorified their God and Saviour amid the fires of affliction, poverty, or temptation. Think again, Grace. Is there nothing that you can do for God?"

"Yes," answered Grace; "I can bear my lameness—my deformity—better. Is not that what you mean, aunt?"

"It is: and I think it would help you, if you could regard this affliction as coming direct from your heavenly Father, and sent in love; for you know that whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, even as a father chastens and corrects his children, that he may do them good at the end. It would be useless for me to attempt to enumerate one half of the mortifications to which your lameness and its conse-

quences now expose you ; but let me point out to you a few of its blessings."

"Its blessings ! O aunt !" — exclaimed Grace, with surprise.

Miss Vernon went on, without heeding the interruption. "You have great natural abilities, my dear child, and a retentive memory and an eager and inquiring spirit ; but, at the same time, you are self-willed and overbearing. As to your abilities, witness the talent and application which has enabled you, in so short a time, not only to equal but surpass your cousins ; and the manner in which, upon every occasion, you never fail to exult and triumph in your superiority. Had that spirit been unchecked by early neglect, unbroken by self-mortification, unhumbled by sorrow, to what might it not have led ? God only knows, and therefore has he set barriers to it ; hedging up your way, it may be with thorns, but still in love, and alluring you into the wilderness, in order that he may speak comfortably to you. Your lameness preserves you from the snares and temptations of the world, by taking away your relish for its gayeties. It gives you more time to spend with God, and affords you an opportunity of manifesting your love for him, by patience and submission to his holy will. It

keeps you nearer to him, and leads you to depend upon him more entirely for all you need of grace and strength and peace."

"I never looked upon it in this light before," said Grace, thoughtfully.

"And will you endeavour to do so now, trusting in Him who has said, 'My strength is made perfect in weakness,' and waiting to see what he would have you do? For, believe me, my dear Grace, the very weakest of us will be permitted to do something for the Saviour whom we love."

"I will try, dear aunt."

"It is God who lays this trial upon you, and he will enable you to bear it. To repine at his will is to doubt his love and power."

"But how can I be cheerful?"

"Not all at once, my dear child. Nevertheless, I do not despair of one day seeing you a happy and even joyful believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. A true believer must needs be happy, let his earthly troubles be what they may."

"Oh! when will that day come?" exclaimed Grace, wearily.

"God's merciful purpose is frequently accomplished by slow degrees, in bringing the wayward will into entire subjection to himself.

And the blessing will be the sweeter for being manifested in his own good time. The Lord's time is always the best time. But I must leave you now, my dear Grace; and I do not think that it will be saying what is untrue if I tell them that you have a headache, and would prefer having your tea sent up to you. Shall I?"

"Yes, aunt, if you please; for my head really aches, and I would rather be alone. Tomorrow I hope to begin a new day: but I have said that so often—"

"Never mind; try again and again, and ask God to help you, for without him you can do nothing."

"I know that," said Grace, seriously and humbly.

Miss Vernon now kissed her affectionately, and, bidding her lie still and rest, went down stairs full of prayerful hope.



CHAPTER VIII.

AT Miss Vernon's desire, Phebe took Grace's tea to her room, and was startled to see how pale she looked, and how red and swollen her eyes were with weeping ; but still more at the gentle tone in which she thanked her, and apologized for giving so much trouble.

"Is there any thing else that I can do for you?" asked her cousin, still lingering.

"No, I thank you, Phebe."

"Is it your head that is so bad?"

"Yes, my head and my side ; but I dare say they will both be better to-morrow."

Phebe was touched by her meek and patient manner, and came back again into the room to give her the little hand-bell, and bid her be sure and ring if she wanted any thing, and she would come up herself, with pleasure. When she was gone, Grace buried her face in the pillow, and wept for joy at her altered manner. "Aunt Alice is right," thought she. "God will yet soften their hearts towards me, if I am only careful to do my part."

For the next few days, Grace was very care-

ful, and her care was not altogether in vain. The first day Phebe helped her a little, and herself desired Willie to be quiet, and not make so much noise when he knew that Grace had a headache.

“Grace always has a headache, I think,” replied the child. “At any rate she will never let me speak, or play about, when she is in the room.”

“But she is really ill to-day, Willie.”

“Never mind, Phebe,” said Grace, gently, “it does not disturb me very much.”

Willie looked up quickly into his cousin's face. “I do pity you now,” said he, “because you speak so; and I will try not to make any more noise.”

Willie kept his word for a whole hour; and Grace was too happy to notice, or remind him, when the impression at length passed away.

“I do think,” said Phebe to her sister, a day or two afterwards, “that Grace is really growing better-tempered.”

“Wait a little,” replied Caroline, “and we shall see.”

Alas! Grace could not stand the ordeal. She was provoked, and answered impatiently. Caroline and her sister exchanged glances. That of the former evidently said, “You see I was

right," and the latter laughed; while Grace again retired to weep and pray. And so the struggle continued for weeks and months with but little progress; but Grace thanked God for that little, and took courage. The consciousness of her own weakness, of her own utter unworthiness, made the Saviour increasingly precious; and thus sanctified the trial, (bitter as it seemed at the time,) to her ultimate benefit, by strengthening her faith and teaching her to look out of herself to Christ for all her comfort and all her happiness.

Grace went out every day when it was fine enough, and found her health and spirits improved by the exercise. At first she only accompanied her aunt, and went to please her; but afterwards she frequently joined Caroline and Phebe in their walks, and tried not to fancy—was it fancy?—that they would sooner have been without her; or to think of the contrast which she presented to her lively and healthy cousins, and wonder whether other people remarked it also.

When any one said, (loud enough for her to hear,) "Poor girl, what a pity that she is lame!" Grace endeavoured to subdue her mortified and swelling heart, and to be thankful for their pity. She tried not to feel glad when they gazed upon

her pale face and drooping form, and whispered softly to one another with a look that plainly said, "She is not long for this world:" and instead of asking God to take her, prayed that he would make her patient, doing his own will in all things, and giving her grace to submit to it.

She could talk now of her affliction, and express her painful sense of it to her sympathizing aunt Alice. And oh, how that kind friend pitied her! Nevertheless, she did not seek to palliate the calamity, or make light of it. She did not tell her, as many would have done, that the charms of mind and intellect are every thing, and so far superior to those of face and form as to make these of no value; but she endeavoured rather to make her understand what her real mission was. "You will have a humbling lot," she said; "but He who has laid this cross upon you will enable you to bear it to his own glory." She tried to make her feel herself the object of a love as immeasurably above, in consolation, strength and changeless sympathy, any human affection, as the heavens are above the earth; that she had a friend in Christ, who would never leave her, nor forsake her; and into whose listening ear she might pour all her trials and griefs, be they small or

great, receiving out of his fulness, mercy and healing and grace for grace; that looking to him she would never be lonely, never left to her own weakness, or to bear a single burden which she might not lay in sweet faith at the foot of the cross, and go on her way rejoicing.

Miss Vernon sought to render Grace less selfish, less morbidly alive to a keen sense of her own peculiar grief, by giving her an opportunity of contrasting it with that of others who were even worse off than herself; and so make her thankful for the blessings which she did enjoy, instead of murmuring and repining about those of which she was bereft. She took her with her to the bed of lingering disease, to the abodes of poverty and destitution; and taught her, in feeling for and relieving others, to forget herself. And now Grace began to rejoice in her own liberal allowance of pocket money, which she had hitherto wasted or hoarded up, according as the whim took her; and to experience the sweet luxury of doing good. A new world was thus opened to her; new hopes, new sources of thought and pleasure and tender compassion. Perhaps Grace dwelt too much on these things, and forgot, in the gratification which they afforded, how little real merit there is in giving away that which costs us nothing.

About this time, when her character was as yet but half formed, and her faith oftentimes weak and wavering, Grace had the unhappiness to be deprived of the society of her kind aunt, who was obliged to go abroad again for a few months, in order to arrange some business relative to the little property which she possessed: and it would have been little indeed for any one less humble and contented than Miss Vernon. Poor Grace deeply felt this heavy bereavement, and her aunt was equally sorry to leave her; but the habit of looking for and beholding God's watchful providence, in all that befalls us, reconciled her to the separation. "It may be the means of leading her to depend more directly upon him," thought Miss Vernon. "At all events, it must be best for both of us, because he orders it." But poor Grace wanted this sweet and consoling faith.

"What shall I do,—what will become of me," said she, "when you are gone, and I have lost my only friend?"

"Your *only* friend, Grace?"

"My only earthly friend, I mean."

"You must turn more simply, more entirely, to your Friend, your Father in heaven, whose ear is ever open to his children's cry. Tell him, even as you tell me, all your little trials

and sorrows and doubts and weaknesses; and he will not let you want consolation. Even your bitterest grief of all, my dear Grace, must not be withheld. There is balm in Gilead for every wound. And you must promise me that, even if you do not make as much progress as you think or hope you shall, you will not despair, or doubt Christ's love and all-sufficiency."

"I will try, dear aunt."

"Neither must you be impatient because your cousins are slow to believe in the work which I hope the Holy Spirit is accomplishing within you. Remember that 'to love and wait' is excellent home-philosophy; and that it is only just that you should give them as much reason to trust, as you have before given them to distrust you. You will have a hard trial, and the harder because you will feel that it is deserved; but recollect that God, in Jesus Christ, is full of mercy and long-suffering, and will do for us far more than we either desire or deserve, if we put our trust in him."

Thus did Miss Vernon endeavour to strengthen and encourage her young friend. She spoke also to her cousins; and Phebe promised to remember her injunctions, while Caroline observed coldly that she hoped it might be so,

and that there was quite room enough for amendment! "You are the only person," said she, "who has the slightest influence over Grace; and I fear that when you are gone she will be worse than ever."

"God can work even without human means," replied Miss Vernon, gravely; "and if he sometimes condescends to employ them, it is only to endear us more to one another."

"Forgive me, my dear aunt," said Caroline, gently. "I did not mean to vex you, or say any thing wrong."

"I am not vexed, Caroline, only grieved that you should be so prejudiced against poor Grace."

"You do not know her as we do," interrupted Phebe; "nor how much we have borne from her without complaining, because, as mother said, she was lame and ill, and that she would become better-tempered after a time: but she never did."

"I know that Grace has been very sinful and passionate, for she has told me so herself, and how sorry she was for it. We all have our faults."

"Yes," said Phebe, "I am sure I have mine."

"And you, Caroline?"

"It is said in the Bible, aunt, that we are all

sinner; so I suppose we are, because I know that the Bible is true."

"And do you only 'suppose'—do you never feel that truth?"

Caroline was silent, but Phebe answered for her. "I must say that I never met with a better temper than Caroline's. Nothing seems to put her out. I often wish that mine was half as good."

"But there are other sins besides those of temper: uncharitableness, for instance; and pride, and self-righteousness; not to mention the daily and hourly sins of our hearts and lives. Nay, we are told in the Scriptures that 'the thought of foolishness is sin.' Do you never have a foolish thought, Caroline?"

"O aunt! what a question!"

"It is one which I would have you put to yourself, my dear girl, and think prayerfully over; for it is not until we are taught to feel the full requirements of that law from the condemnation of which Christ came to deliver us, that we begin to feel the exceeding preciousness of having such a Saviour, and our own lost condition without him."

"I wish that you were not going away, my dear aunt," said Phebe. "I love to hear you talk; and I feel, like poor Grace, better and

happier when you are with me ; but the impression soon wears off, and all my good thoughts and resolutions end with it."

Miss Vernon smiled kindly as she kissed her, giving her a great deal of affectionate advice, and thanking God in her heart for that love which he had put into the hearts of others towards her ; while she prayed to be enabled to use the influence which it gave her only for their good and his glory.



CHAPTER IX.

MR. HARRINGTON was a rich merchant. He was absent from home the greater part of the day at his counting-house. Sometimes he was too weary upon his return, or too much occupied with business, to care for the society of his children; while at others he took pleasure in inquiring into their progress, or suffering himself to be amused by the little accomplishments with which they sought to please him. But of late he had become much changed, and a settled gloom hung over him, which often communicated itself to the other members of that once cheerful circle.

One evening, Mr. Harrington observed that neither of his daughters played nearly so well as Grace, and requested that they would practise diligently.

“To confess the truth,” said his wife, “I would rather that they devoted the time to something more useful. Grace has a natural genius for music; but the girls will play well enough, I dare say, for all that will be required of them.”

“There is no knowing what may be required of them,” observed Mr. Harrington.

“Very true, my dear.”

“I should wish them likewise to pay particular attention to their Italian and German, the study of languages is so much thought of in these days ; and it may be useful also in translating.”

“Yes, we could help father,” said Phebe ; “but I am sure I do not know when : German is so difficult.”

“I trust that you will never have any greater difficulty to encounter, my dear Phebe,” replied her father, gravely.

There was a long pause, and Phebe availed herself of it, and of the gradual softening of his countenance, to draw closer to him ; and resting her head against his shoulder, whispered gently—

“Dear father, Caroline and I have a very great favour to ask.”

“What is it, Phebe ?”

“That you will buy us tickets for a juvenile ball, which is to be given in a few days, for the relief of the poor Irish.”

“I am sorry that I cannot comply with your request, my child.”

“Perhaps you agree with Grace, in thinking it wicked to go to balls,” said Phebe.

"Does Grace think it wicked? But I suppose that is because she cannot dance," observed Mr. Harrington, while the conscience-stricken girl coloured deeply. "No, it is not that I think it wicked, but because I think it expensive."

"Is that all?" exclaimed Phebe, hopefully. Mr. Harrington sighed.

"Well, father," said his little daughter, in coaxing accents, while Caroline leaned upon the arm of his chair, and looked beseechingly at him; "to be, or not to be?"

"Not to be," replied Mr. Harrington, putting her gently from him.

"After all," said his wife, willing to indulge her children, "it will not be so very expensive. To be sure, they must have new dresses; and then there are the ball tickets, and the carriage there and back; but a few dollars will pay for every thing; and they may never have such a treat again."

"I have said, or if not, I tell you now, that I cannot afford it." And Mr. Harrington looked so cold and stern that no one dared urge him any further on the subject. He soon afterwards retired to his own study, and appeared no more that evening. Phebe could not avoid shedding tears.

"It cannot be helped," said Caroline; "but I must own that I am a little disappointed."

"A little! I was never so disappointed in my life," replied her sister; "and Grace, I suppose, is rejoiced to think that we have been spared from committing so great a sin."

"No, indeed," said her cousin. "I am sorry for your disappointment; but I wish, my dear Phebe, that you would not set your heart so much as you do on such amusements."

Phebe laughed, in spite of her vexation, at the tone and manner in which these words were unconsciously pronounced.

"But this ball is for the relief of the poor Irish; although I will not pretend that it is this which makes me so anxious to go," added Phebe, ingenuously.

"Would it not be better," said Grace, "for each person to reckon up what it would cost for gloves and shoes and a ball-dress and coach-hire and music, and send the poor Irish the exact sum, without any more trouble? As it is, they only get the money for the tickets, after the expenses of the room have been taken out of it."

"There would not be much amusement in that," said Phebe.

“Then people do not go out of charity, but for amusement.”

“Some do, I dare say—myself for one ; but many have a better motive.”

“I doubt it,” said Grace, very decidedly ; “and I doubt whether God’s blessing ever accompanies such motives, or such charities.”

“Grace,” interposed her aunt, gravely, “remember that you are but a child, and that it is very wrong to set up your own opinion and judge harshly of others. I have taken great interest in this charity, and believe it calculated to do much good.”

“Forgive me,” said Grace, colouring deeply, and conscious of having been carried away by her feelings to utter words that had been better left unsaid ; “and show me that you do so by permitting me to pay my money, even though I do not want a ball ticket.”

“I forgive you freely,” said Mrs. Harrington, who was both surprised and pleased at the evident amendment in Grace’s temper ; “but you do not yet know the proper value of money.”

“Oh yes I do—thanks to aunt Alice ! I know that it is given us to do good with, and make others happy.”

“If some people could only practise as well as they preach, how different they would be !”

said Phebe. But a moment after she had said it, she felt sorry ; and the more so when Grace made no reply. The poor girl felt the truth of this remark too deeply to resent it ; but Phebe was disappointed, and out of humour.

Many bitter things were said that night, which Grace, stung by their injustice, did not always remember to bear so patiently as she should, and mutual recrimination followed. As yet she had but little of the spirit of Him who, "when he was reviled, reviled not again ;" and, although there were times when she sought it prayerfully and with tears, it far oftener happened that she gave way to the angry passions of her own heart ; laying up for herself a store of bitter memories and vain regrets.

Deprived of her only earthly friend, religion had become all in all to Grace Dermott : it was her refuge in her loneliness ; her strength amid her weakness ; her support, her wealth, her comfort in her trials and privations. But she forgot that it could not be all this in so great a degree to others ; and so grew hard and strict and even fanatical. Just as her cousins had overlooked the temptations of pain and ill-health and a morbid sensibility, when they called her proud and ill-humoured, did she overlook in them all the excitements of youth,

attractiveness and high spirits, when she rebuked them so harshly for loving worldly things too well. It seemed a marvel to her that they should be always longing to go to balls and parties, and to scenes from which she naturally shrank. It was a marvel to them how she could possibly prefer remaining at home.

A spirit of self-complacency sometimes stole into the heart of Grace, when they had gone away, and left her sitting all alone, with her little Bible before her. And then that heart narrowed; and it seemed strange that others should not think and feel as she did; that religion should not be to every one else what it was to her. And yet Grace followed her own inclinations in staying at home, quite as much as her cousins did when they went out. Again, we say, let us forbear to judge one another. When Mr. Harrington observed that he supposed the reason why Grace thought it wicked to go to balls was because she could not dance, he had unconsciously approached very near to the truth; and Grace was shocked for a moment at the glimpse which it gave her of her own heart. It was a pity that she forgot it again so soon.

We are no advocates for worldly pleasures, remembering the commandment of Him who

has said that "the friendship of the world is enmity with God."* And again, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."† But we know that its attractions, for various reasons, are far greater to some than to others; and, although we are encouraged to warn and pray for, we are not justified in condemning, or speaking reproachfully of those whose views and practices on such points we might feel bound in conscience to avoid.

* James iv. 4.

† 1 John ii. 15.



CHAPTER X.

NOTWITHSTANDING all that he had said, Mr. Harrington was afterwards persuaded to give his consent to Caroline and Phebe's going to the ball, accompanied by their mother; although it was evident that he did so with pain and reluctance, which all their grateful thanks and Phebe's affectionate kisses could not remove.

"As you observed," said he, gloomily, to his wife, "they may never have such a treat again."

In consequence of a fever which was raging in the neighbourhood of the college, Robert came home unexpectedly a few days before the ball took place, and of course there was another ticket procured, and preparations made for him to accompany his mother and sisters.

Grace could not feel any interest in their arrangements; and she did not think it right even to pretend to do so, although, to confess the truth, her sympathy was neither required nor missed. Once, when Phebe was standing before the glass, arranging a flower among her

dark curls, and wishing that she might be permitted to wear it, just for one night, Grace asked her if she had ever heard the anecdote related by Mr. McCheyne of a young girl, who, upon being offered a wreath of roses for her hair, replied, "How can I wear a crown of roses, when my Saviour wore a crown of thorns?"

Phebe coloured; but before she could reply, her brother, who had hitherto taken but little notice of Grace, threw down his book and came hastily forward.

"So you have set up for a saint," said he; "and it is the only thing you are fit for."

Grace trembled before his scornful glance; and still more when he seized her roughly by the arm, and pulling her opposite to the mirror, placed the bright flower in her hair, in mocking contrast with her wan countenance.

"What do you think of yourself?" said he. Grace shuddered.

"The roses would not have much temptation for you! Eh, girls?"

His sisters smiled.

"Let us have no more of this mummary," said Robert, releasing her at length. "What is the matter now?" added he, somewhat touched by her silence and her tears.

"You hurt me, Robert;" and she showed

her arm discoloured by the violence of his grasp. But it was not pain that made Grace weep.

“I did not mean to do so, and I am very sorry ; but you really provoke me beyond bearing with your cant. Shake hands, Grace, and promise never to do so any more.”

Grace held out her hand, and promised as he desired. “I was wrong,” said she ; “but I will not do it again.”

Robert kept hold of her hand, while he gazed upon her pale, sorrowful, but not resentful countenance ; and then suddenly drawing her towards him, kissed her forehead.

When Grace found herself once more alone, the old feeling of bitterness and despair came back to her heart. She saw her sin, her presumption, and also its humiliating cause. “I have dared to compare myself with others,” murmured she, “and judge them by my own thoughts and feelings :—I who am so different from all the world. How beautiful Phebe looked with that flower in her hair ! It was no wonder that she should wish to wear it. How fearfully did it mock my pale and sallow complexion ! As Robert said, it was no temptation to me. And yet I judged her ! God forgive me.”

Grace kneeled down weeping by the bedside,

and, as she prayed, better thoughts arose; thoughts of atonement to her cousins, and of thankfulness to God, who had alone made her to differ. For the first time in her life, Grace thanked him even for her lameness and deformity, as the means of removing her from the manifold temptations of the world, and keeping her nearer to himself; while she prayed never again to be permitted to judge harshly or unkindly of others. And now she began to remember with pleasure the affectionate salute of her cousin Robert, and to find a fresh occasion for gratitude in the strength which had been given to her to resist the first passionate impulse of her own heart; for she well knew that of ourselves we cannot do any thing good.

Robert did not tease Grace as he used to do; but he kept a strict watch for all those inconsistencies of conduct which were frequently but too evident, and told her of them without scruple, and, it must be confessed, with but little kindness. "If people profess to be religious," said he, upon one occasion, "they should be cheerful and good humoured, or they make it appear but a sad and gloomy thing after all."

Grace felt the truth of the observation, and longed to tell him how many things there were to make her sorrowful: such as the conscious-

ness of her own deficiencies and short-comings; the constant pain of mind and body which she endured; and how religion, amid all this, and in spite of it, was her sole comfort and her dearest joy. But she could not put it into words, and therefore remained silent; nevertheless, she did not forget what he had said, and tried to profit by it; but there was very little outwardly to encourage poor Grace to be cheerful; and, as we have said, her cousins did not understand her, and forbore to help her.

“There is only one thing more that I should like,” said Caroline, the evening before the ball was to take place.

“And what is that, sister?”

“A bouquet of flowers. Miss Ackhurst is going to have such a splendid one.”

“But they are very dear at this time of year; and mother has already been at a great expense for us.”

“Yes, I suppose I must do without them.”

“I wish I could help you, girls,” said Robert, “but I am very short of cash just at present; and my father is always so displeased now when I ask him for money.”

“Never mind,” replied Caroline, “we can do very well without them. It was foolish in me to mention it.”

The following day, when Robert and his sis-

ters returned from their morning walk, they met Grace in the hall, with her bonnet on, and evidently only just come in.

“So you have been out after all,” said Phebe, “although you would not go with us.”

“It is just like her,” echoed Caroline.

“But surely you did not go alone, Grace?”

“No, I took Susan with me.”

“I would venture any thing that Grace has been to a prayer-meeting!” exclaimed Robert, laughing.

“No, indeed,” replied Grace, disengaging herself from his grasp.

“Then you do not mean to confess?”

“Let her alone,” interrupted Caroline. “I am sure no one cares where she has been; and I want you to practise with me.”

Robert followed his sisters; and Grace passed on into her own room, smiling to herself as she went, and feeling strangely happy. A little thing makes us happy sometimes.

“They will be sorry for what they have said,” thought she; “and then perhaps it will make them more careful another time, when I really do deserve that they should be vexed with me.”

When Caroline and Phebe went up-stairs to prepare for the ball, they found two magnificent bouquets of flowers lying on the dressing-room table; and ran into their mother’s apartment

to thank her for them. Mrs. Harrington declared that it was the first thing she had heard of it, and that she should never have thought of buying them.

"Then it must have been Robert," said Caroline.

Robert denied it, however, in the most positive manner.

"Do you think that Grace bought them?" asked Phebe, hesitatingly.

"Grace, indeed! And yet now I remember she did go out this morning in a very mysterious way." Caroline paused; for she also remembered much which she would have been glad at that moment to have forgotten.

Robert had gone in search of his cousin, whom he found sitting alone in the deserted drawing-room, with a book upon her knees, but she was not reading. "You must come with me, and answer for yourself," said he, abruptly.

Grace coloured, and her heart beat fast; she knew that it was of no use to refuse, while her slow, halting step kept but ill time with his impatience. Just as they came to the door, he turned suddenly round, and catching her up in his arms, carried her up-stairs.

"How light you are, Grace; why, you are a mere feather."

Grace laughed, and struggled to be set down;

but Robert would take her into the room himself, where he placed her in a large, easy chair.

“It was she!” exclaimed Phebe, eagerly. “I have made Susan confess. We are so much obliged to you, my dear Grace. It was so kind in you to think of it; and the flowers are beautiful.”

“I am sorry that I spoke to you as I did,” said Caroline, hesitatingly; but Grace interrupted her—

“Pray do not say any more about it. It was natural that you should think it strange and ill-natured for me to refuse to accompany you, and then go out directly afterwards by myself. I am glad that you and Phebe like the flowers: and now let us talk of something else.”

“It was better than going to a prayer-meeting,” whispered Robert, as he leaned upon the back of her chair. “The only religion that I like is that of love and kindness.”

He little thought how much of the little love and kindness there is in the world is the fruit of prayer!

Grace remained in the room, and helped them a great deal in preparing, for she felt very cheerful and active; and it was not until the carriage drove from the door that she had time to think over all that had passed, with hope and gratitude.

CHAPTER XI.

LITTLE Willie had been unusually fretful and restless all day; but towards evening he became almost unbearable, and Grace felt quite relieved when he was summoned to bed, and would not hear of his request to be permitted to sit up a little longer, as they were all gone out.

"No, no," said she, "bed is the only place for naughty children."

"But I will not be naughty any more, cousin Grace, if you will only let me stay."

Grace, however, was inexorable; and she heard him crying as he went up-stairs.

"So you do not approve of balls, Grace?" said Mr. Harrington, looking up from the book which he had been reading, and startling her out of a deep revery, by the unexpected address, for he seldom troubled himself to talk to her.

"No, uncle."

"You call them wicked, I believe?"

"I think," answered Grace, colouring as she spoke, "that it is at best a very foolish and unprofitable way of spending one's time."

"And money too," added her uncle.

"Yes, sir, and money."

"You will be more careful of yours, I suppose; for you will be very rich some day, Grace. Your fortune, thank God, is safe; and I have taken great pains to place it securely."

"Thank you; you are very kind."

"No, Grace, not kind, I am only just; but it is difficult sometimes to be even just:" and Mr. Harrington became apparently lost in thought. It was nearly half an hour before he spoke again.

"I am afraid you have not always a very comfortable home here, Grace, and that Caroline and Phebe are not so kind to you as they might be: but they do not mean it; they are young and thoughtless."

"I have nothing to complain of."

"But are you happy, Grace?"

"Yes, very happy, since—since aunt Alice came and instructed me. She first gave me some idea of the love of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ for sinners, and how he came into the world to save them, and died for them on the cross. Oh! it is impossible to help being happy and thankful too, when we think of this, uncle."

"You are a strange girl," said Mr. Harrington.

Grace coloured, and smiled. He did not again address her, and she read on until it was time to retire.

Susan, who was evidently waiting for her, met her on the stairs.

“I wish that you would step in and see Willie,” said she; “I do think that he is very ill.”

“Eh! what is that?” inquired Mr. Harrington.

Susan repeated the words, but Grace had already passed on into her cousin’s chamber. Willie started up in the bed at the sound of her crutch, for she could not walk lightly, do what she would. His face was flushed, and his eyes red, while his lips looked swollen and purple.

“Go away,” exclaimed he, shaking his little fist at her. “Go away, I say,—cross, ugly Grace.”

Mr. Harrington spoke soothingly to him, but Willie evidently did not understand what he said; and then, much terrified, he went himself for Doctor Grenfield.

It was an hour or more before they returned. Grace was still there, with Willie’s head resting on her shoulder, for the child had fallen asleep. Doctor Grenfield looked anxiously at her, and then at Mr. Harrington.

It was a decided case of scarlet fever, and he feared that Grace had exposed herself.

"Why are you here instead of Susan," said Mr. Harrington.

"Susan was afraid," said Grace, turning to her uncle; "and Willie did not know me afterwards, so I thought that I had better remain with him. I am not in the least afraid."

About an hour after midnight, she heard the carriage drive up, and knew that her aunt and cousins had returned. Her heart bled for the sorrow that awaited them. Presently the door opened softly, and Mrs. Harrington crept in, in her gay ball-dress, followed by her husband. Gentle and passive as she generally was, not even his commands could keep the mother from the bedside of her youngest-born. And how strange she looked, with her pale face and her rich and jewelled robe!

"He still sleeps," whispered Mr. Harrington. "He may do well yet—better than we hoped for."

"God grant it!" she passionately exclaimed.

"And now, come away."

"Yes, I must change my dress."

Again Grace was left alone; but not for a long time. And then her aunt came back, calm and collected, with her morning wrapper on and

a book in her hand. She thanked Grace for what she had done, and advised her to lie down for a few hours in the next room, and try to rest. "For we are both prisoners," said she; — "for the present at least."

Grace assured her aunt that she did not mind it, and that she hoped she would permit her to keep her company, and help to nurse little Willie. But in order to recruit her strength, that she might be the more useful, she went and lay down as she was desired, and soon fell into a sweet sleep.

For the next few days Willie was in a high fever, and for a little time his life was despaired of. But it pleased his heavenly Father to give effect to the remedies that were used. A quiet sleep was produced, from which he awoke with favourable symptoms. A new nurse came; but, with the capriciousness of disease, the child would take nothing but from the hand of Grace, nor suffer any one else to approach him.

No other member of the family took the fever, although the fatigue which she had undergone gave a shock to Grace's weak constitution, which it never afterwards entirely recovered. But she was not one to complain, and few guessed how much she really suffered. Willie stood a fair chance of becoming more

of a spoiled child than ever ; but it was almost certain that he would never tease Grace as he had done. He promised her so again and again ; while she, on her part, agreed never to scold or be angry with him, if she could help it,—even if he did.

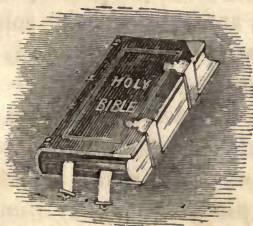
“Grace,” said her aunt, one day, as she moved somewhat awkwardly across the room, “you would make an excellent nurse if it were not for that crutch.”

“Does it disturb you very much, Willie dear ?” asked his cousin, bending over his pillow.

“No, I like it ; for then I know that you are somewhere near.”

“You ought to love Grace,” said his mother, “for she has been very kind to you.”

“And so I do, dearly, dearly—crutch and all ! And now sit down, Grace, and tell me more stories out of your little Bible.”



CHAPTER XII.

IN due time the family returned to their usual customs—and the fear of the disease passed away. Little Willie was brought down and laid upon the sofa, wrapped up in a shawl. Although still weak, he was very cheerful and animated; and loved to talk of all his cousin's kindness to him, and repeat to his mother and sisters the stories which she had invented to amuse him. Every moment he kept saying, "Is that right, cousin Grace?" And Grace smiled, and nodded her head, and looked so happy that they all forgot to notice her excessive paleness. Phebe saw, however, that she appeared languid, and was on the watch to anticipate her wishes, and prevent her from having to move; while Robert brought an ottoman for her feet, and arranged the sofa-pillows behind her back, until she looked, as he said, quite comfortable.

"Oh, if aunt Alice could but see us all now," thought Grace; and her heart swelled with thankfulness to God.

But this pleasant state of things was not

destined to last very long. In a few weeks Robert returned to college, and his sisters very soon forgot all their good resolutions; and if they forebore to provoke Grace so much as formerly, they treated her with a chilling indifference, which was even more difficult to endure. Neither was Grace altogether blameless. Constant suffering frequently made her irritable; and as she was averse to any thing like complaining, no one knew how much she had to try her bodily and mental strength. But she and Willie never once broke the compact which they had made. If his noise disturbed her, and she felt herself about to speak harshly and impatiently, Grace recalled to mind her own feelings, as she had sat by his bedside, not knowing but that it might prove a bed of death; and the thought restrained her.

“Do you never have the headache now, Grace?” inquired the little fellow, one morning,—looking up from his play.

“Yes, very frequently,—almost always: but why do you ask?”

“Because you never complain now, or scold at me as you used to.”

“Have I not promised never to scold at you again, dear Willie?”

“Yes; but if you were to tell me gently

when you feel ill, I would be so quiet, indeed I would; as quiet as you were when you used to sit all night by my bedside. Will you, cousin Grace?"

Grace kissed him, and said that she would; but somehow she had never the heart to interrupt him in his cheerful play.

One evening, Susan told Grace of a poor woman who lived next door to her mother, and who was in great poverty and distress, without friends or any one to care for her, and dying of a consumption.

"Mother has done all she could for her," said Susan, "but she is poor herself. So I thought I would make bold to mention it to you, knowing that you give a great deal to the poor and sick; and I am sure that no one can want it more than she does."

"You did very right, Susan, and I am much obliged to you. I will go and see the poor woman to-morrow. But you must tell me her name."

"Ann Harvey."

Grace turned pale, and put her hand to her heart, as she always did now, when any thing startled or agitated her.

"Are you not well, Miss Grace?" asked Susan.

“Not very. I do not think that I shall be able to walk so far; but you can go to your mother, Susan, and bid her lay this out for the poor woman, and see that she wants for nothing.”

Susan took the money, and did as she was desired. She could not guess the struggle that was going on in the heart of her young mistress; not knowing that this same Ann Harvey, for whom she had been pleading, was the sole cause of all poor Grace's lameness and deformity. But was she the cause? Was she not rather the instrument in the hand of God to accomplish his perfect will? Grace tried to think so, and to conquer her rebellious feelings, and the loathing which sprang up in her heart against the unfortunate woman. She tried to satisfy her own conscience, by believing that she had done enough; but she could not forget how Susan had said that Ann Harvey was dying, without friends or any one to care for her.

“Oh, if aunt Alice were but here!” thought Grace. “But I know what she would say, for I know what is written in God's holy word: ‘If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of

evil, but overcome evil with good.' Yes, I will try if I cannot overcome evil with good."

The following day, Grace went to see Ann Harvey, and was shocked at her death-like appearance. It was impossible to harbour a single feeling of resentment against one whose course was so nearly run. Grace spoke kindly and soothingly, but the poor woman was too weak to reply, and could express her gratitude only in looks; and then, having cautioned Susan and her mother not to mention her name, and finding that she could be of no further service, she returned home.

The first time that Grace saw Doctor Grenfield alone, she gave him Ann Harvey's address, and asked him to call, which he did,—for Grace had become a great favourite with the worthy doctor, since he had seen so much of her at the time of Willie's illness. He told her that medicine was of no use; and that the only thing she could do was to make her as comfortable as she could for the few weeks which, in all probability, she had to live. Grace burst into tears.

"Is this woman any thing to you?" asked the doctor.

"No, sir; but it is a terrible thing to die."

"It is what we must all come to, sooner or

later, my dear child : and no one knows how soon." His glance rested upon the slight and fragile form before him, as he spoke.

"Then we ought all to be prepared for it," said Grace.

"And how are we to prepare ourselves, my little philosopher?"

"O sir ! there is only one way : we must believe in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. But of course you know that," said Grace, pausing suddenly, with a deep blush.

"One cannot know it too well, or feel it too earnestly. Yes, it is Jesus only who can make a death-bed peaceful ! I have seen a great many death-beds in my time, Grace ; young and old."

"I suppose so, sir."

"Some very happy ones."

"I wonder whether you will see mine," thought Grace ; but undesignedly she spoke as well as thought.

Doctor Grenfield started, and telling her that she was a silly child to talk in that way, bade her ask her aunt's leave to let him take her to ride, as his carriage was still waiting ; and he was sure, he said, that the fresh air would do her good, and disperse all such gloomy thoughts. Grace returned cheerfully, with the desired permission : and after that she

frequently went out with the good doctor, when he could spare time to take her.

The next time that Grace went to see Ann Harvey, she took her little Bible, and offered to read it to her; but it was evident that the woman listened more from gratitude than any thing else. And then Grace would pray to God to put it into her heart what portions to choose, and what she should say to arouse this poor woman to a sense of her own lost condition, while without the knowledge of a divine Redeemer.

As Grace always took Susan with her in her visits of charity, Mrs. Harrington made no objection to her going, and but few inquiries; being well content that she should have found some inducement to take that exercise which was so necessary for her health, and knowing that the girl's mother, although poor, was a respectable woman, and not likely to lead her into any danger of infection. She even told Grace, that if she could be of use to her protégée, she was not to hesitate to come to her, which she gratefully promised to do.

Grace frequently returned home, weary and out of spirits, and almost tempted to give up her task in despair, but for His promise who has said, "My strength is made perfect in weakness." It was difficult at such times, when

her head and heart were filled with but one subject, to affect an interest which she did not feel, rather than appear hard or ungracious by her silence and abstraction; and the more so that her advances were, at best, but coldly received, and her assistance tolerated rather than sought.

Caroline and Phebe would have been shocked, had any one whispered to them the real reason of their inveterate dislike against their cousin, which continued even after the original cause had, in a measure, passed away. Grace was seldom passionate or vindictive now, but she had surpassed them in all their studies, and did not always bear her honours so meekly as she might have done. Having nothing else to be proud of, she was too apt to pride herself upon her mental superiority; and too fond of displaying her few attractions, or rather accomplishments. There is nothing so sweet or so dangerous as praise. When Grace saw her drawings pass from hand to hand, and heard the exclamations of "Beautiful!"—"Wonderful! considering the short time she has practised"—"And did you really do all this yourself, Miss Dermott?" she would reply in the affirmative, with a flushed cheek and beating heart. Sometimes she sat down to the piano, and, guided by an exquisite musical taste, as her hand swept over the keys, she

listened to the praises of the performance, but saw not the pity expressed for the performer.

Very often, when Caroline and Phebe returned from their walk, and met Grace coming in, pale and weary, and yet happy, from her labour of love, they felt that her smile was a tacit reproof; and yet Grace meant it not, and she would have been very glad of their help and sympathy, only that she feared to ask it, or refer to a subject which only provoked their ridicule. Caroline observed one day that it was a pity that Grace was not a nun, or a Sister of Charity.

“But one need not be a nun or a Sister of Charity, in order to do good, Caroline,” said her mother, gravely.

Poor Grace! she thought for a moment that perhaps it would be a very pleasant thing to be wrapped up in a veil, so that no one could see how plain and deformed she was, and to be shut out from a world in which she could never hope to be like other people; until, recollecting who it was that had placed her there, she resolutely determined never again to be ashamed of that cross which had been laid upon her in love. The language of her heart was—“The cup that my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?”

CHAPTER XIII.

CAROLINE and Phebe did not know that it was ill-health, and perhaps a night of pain and sleeplessness, that often made Grace come down to breakfast with every nerve, as it were, unstrung ; so that each word seemed to jar and fret and irritate. They said, she was just in a humour to be impatient and out of temper at what seemed to them the merest trifle : but they did not know how much she suffered, or they would have soothed and spoken kindly to her, or at least have taken no notice of what was plainly more the effect of disease than any thing else. Poor Grace struggled against it oftentimes in vain, and retired defeated, ashamed and self-accused, to weep alone over her broken resolutions. They did not know of the tears shed in secret for the strong bands of sin so difficult to break through ; and how, under a painful consciousness of her guilt, of her fretful and impatient temper, she was continually upon her knees, praying God to forgive and subdue it, and entreating that her dear cousins might not be prejudiced, through

her inconsistent life, against that Saviour whose religion she professed, and whom, in spite of all her sinfulness, she loved so much.

But although Grace humbly confessed and bitterly deplored the faults which she committed, it was no longer with the hopelessness of despair. With increasing faith, she could now adopt the beautiful language of the Psalmist, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance." She knew where her help was: "O thou who hast delivered my soul from death, wilt thou not deliver my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the land of the living?" How sweet it is when we can thus plead with God in his own words, and through his own appointed way, the mediation of Jesus Christ our Saviour!

Though aunt Alice was far away, and there was no one with whom Grace could talk of spiritual things, or ask concerning the many doubts and difficulties that frequently occupied and bewildered her mind, she was not left desolate. She had still her little Bible, to which she could refer; and many a providential coincidence occurred in which the very subject that had puzzled her was explained in the next Sab-

bath-day's discourse, just as if the minister had known what was in her heart. But God knew; and thus it is that he sendeth "help from the sanctuary." How many such sweet providences are continually happening to us all, if we would but notice and keep record of them! How many texts and sermons and portions of Scripture occurring in our daily reading, would appear to us like a voice from heaven, directing, comforting and assuring us, and shedding a ray of Divine light on what seemed before to be dark and gloomy, and hard to bear!

Grace kept a little book, in which she wrote, from time to time, such passages as the following, some of which had a date attached to them:

"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am the chief."*

"Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."†

"If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it."‡

"I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners. Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the Lord; and I will heal him."§

* 1 Tim. i. 15. † John vi. 37. ‡ John xiv. 14.

§ Isa. lvii. 18, 19.

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”*

“Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.”†

“The Lord will not cast off for ever: but though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies. For he doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men.”‡

No one could read these passages without pronouncing them to be beautiful and full of comfort; but Grace had felt that beauty and that comfort, and recorded them as joyful Ebenezers of the past; while she drew from them sweet encouragement, and a brighter faith for future trials.

Caroline and Phebe frequently went to little parties at the houses of their youthful friends, much more frequently than Mr. Harrington approved of, although he was too indulgent to deny them the gratification which it seemed to afford.

“After all,” said he, upon one occasion, “it will not be for long.”

“Then you still think of sending Caroline to

* Matt. xi. 28. † Isa. xli. 10. ‡ Lam. iii. 31-33.

school for a year, to finish her education?" said his wife.

"No, I was not thinking of that. But why is it that Grace never goes out? Is she not invited?"

"Yes, sometimes; but you know she does not dance; and—"

"Oh! I had forgotten; and she thinks it is wicked to go to balls and parties—is it not so, Grace?"

"I do not think it would be right for me, uncle," replied Grace, hesitatingly; "but then, as my aunt says, I cannot dance. I do not know what I might think if I were in my cousins' place. It is as well, perhaps, that I am not tried."

"You did not always reason as you do now."

"No," said Grace, colouring slightly; "I have often been harsh and uncharitable."

"And what has led to such a change in your sentiments?"

"I can scarcely tell you, uncle; unless it is that the more we know of ourselves, the less we feel inclined to judge others."

"Then you still think it a sin?"

"God tells us that we must not love or be conformed to this world. But then, as I said before, the world has so few temptations for

me that there is no merit and no sacrifice in thinking and acting as I do."

"The world would have few temptations for any one, Grace, if they knew how hollow and worthless a thing it really is." Mr. Harrington spoke with severity, and with a contracted brow.

"Surely you do not think, my dear, that there is any harm in these little innocent amusements?" said his wife, gently.

"Not if they were innocent. But I am not speaking of religion, so you need not look so earnestly at me, Grace—I have neglected that too long—but simply in a worldly point of view."

Grace moved away, for she saw that he was much excited.

"I am afraid that I do not quite understand you either," said Mrs. Harrington.

"Very likely not. But go! The girls are waiting."

"Not if you are ill," replied his wife, affectionately taking his hand.

Mr. Harrington smiled; and making an effort to shake off the depression of his spirits, assured her that he was very well, only a little vexed at some pecuniary disappointments.

"Is that all?" said his wife, cheerfully. "I am glad that it is no worse; for you really

frighten me with your strange looks and mysterious words."

"Yes, that is all," repeated Mr. Harrington, with a sigh.

Caroline and Phebe entered at that moment, ready dressed. "Father is not well," exclaimed the latter, with quick-sighted affection, as she went up to him and put her arms about his neck.

"Take care, Phebe," said her sister, "or you will spoil your dress. Is any thing the matter, father?"

"No, go and enjoy yourselves." And he looked upon them, as they stood together, with all a father's pride.

"But are you sure?" asked the incredulous Phebe; "because, if so, I will stay at home with pleasure."

"What, stay away from this gay party for me, Phebe?"

"Surely, father."

"We will all stay with you, if you like," said Mrs. Harrington. "We will do any thing to please and make you happy."

Her husband turned away his head.

"Hark!" said he, after a pause; "there is the carriage. Good night, for I shall be in bed, I dare say, before you return."

"Good night, dear father."

Mrs. Harrington stooped down and kissed his forehead. But her heart was heavy.

Grace stood apart, looking at them all with the tears in her eyes. They would have passed without noticing her, had she not stopped Phebe to tell her that her sash was untied.

"Thank you. Be quick, if you please; for they are waiting."

"I hope you will have a pleasant evening, Phebe," said Grace, gently,—as she fastened the ribbon.

"You are very kind, Grace. I wish you were going too. It must be so dull for you to be all alone."

"I do not find it dull."

"Somehow," continued Phebe, "to-night puts me in mind of the time when Willie was taken ill with the fever; and you were so kind and brave-hearted, Grace. I am afraid that we do not remember that time so often as we should."

"It was a happy time, notwithstanding its trouble; for it has made Willie and me love one another ever since."

"It should have made us love you also."

"But I am afraid that I do not always deserve your love," said Grace, humbly.

Phebe's reply was arrested by the impatient voices of her mother and sister, calling to her

to make haste ; and pressing her cousin's hand, she hurried away with the tears in her eyes.

"Phebe has a good heart," thought Grace. "Oh, if she would but bear with me ; if she would but try to love me in spite of my faults, and help me to correct them ! And perhaps she will, some day."

As soon as they were gone, Willie came to ask her to hear him repeat his school-lessons ; and then begged so earnestly for a story, that Grace had not the heart to refuse. And putting aside her book, she took him up in her lap, and amused him until it was time for him to go to bed ; feeling more than repaid for any little sacrifice of her own feelings by his cheerful "good night" and loving kiss.

"Oh how much better is this," thought Grace, "than being selfish and ill-humoured !" And she actually smiled to herself, as she drew the lamp towards her, and once more opened her book. "How much better it is to be sitting here so snug and comfortable, than going to dances and pleasure parties ; at least it seems so to me !"

Grace had no reason to change her opinion when the following morning came and found her cousins weary with excitement and late hours, and unfitted for study or exertion of any kind.

CHAPTER XIV.

GRACE went regularly to visit Ann Harvey, who was always glad to see her, and very grateful for her kindness; but it was too evident that she took little interest in those important topics which filled the whole heart of her young benefactress. One morning, Susan, who generally accompanied Grace, and remained with her mother until she was ready to return home, having occasion to enter the room with something which she had forgotten, happened accidentally to address her by her name. The woman started, and changed countenance.

“Dermott!” repeated she; “and lame! Somehow I thought that I had seen the face before, only that it looked so different then. Can it be Miss Grace?”

“Yes, I am Grace Dermott. But why do you ask?”

“O Miss Grace! you do not remember—you may not have heard—”

“I know every thing,” interrupted Grace, soothingly.

“No, no, you cannot, or you would not be here! Little did I think, when I first heard the sound of your crutch and your kind voice, asking me how I did, that it was I who had made you what you are,—who have destroyed your comfort. God forgive me!”

“But it was not intentional. You did not design to do it, Ann; and even if you had, we are commanded in the Scriptures not only to pardon, but to love our enemies: although I do not mean to say that you are my enemy.”

Ann Harvey covered her face with her hands, and burst into tears.

“Hush! do not weep. It was God’s will that I should be lame; and whatever he wills is best. He has made my lameness a blessing to me.”

“And are you really happy, Miss Grace?”

“Yes,” answered Grace; “I am always happy when I can forget myself and think only of Christ: he is my happiness.”

“There is no happiness for me! There is no Saviour for me! I have neglected him all my life, and it is too late now.”

“You must not say that, Ann; you must not limit God’s mercy. Have you forgotten the Saviour’s words—‘Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and

it shall be opened unto you : for every one that asketh receiveth ; and he that seeketh findeth ; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened ?" Shall I read to you a little ?"

"Yes, yes ! I was hoping that you would offer, but I did not dare to ask. O Miss Grace ! how little do I deserve that you should be so good to me."

Grace spoke kindly and soothingly to her ; and then, having arranged the pillows, and placed within Ann's reach some grapes which she had brought, she opened her little Bible, and after a short and silent prayer began to read the touching and beautiful parable contained in the fifteenth chapter of the Gospel by Luke. So touching and so complete did it appear to Grace, as she read, that she dared not add to it any words of her own, but only prayed that the Holy Spirit would apply it to the heart of Ann Harvey, whose deep sobs alone broke the silence that ensued, until Grace interrupted it, at length, by repeating in a low voice, part of the tenth verse : "I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

"It is too late !" murmured Ann, turning away her head.

Grace remained with her as long as she

could, talking to her, and pointing out such passages of Scripture as she thought suited to her case, or likely to bring peace and comfort to her troubled spirit. And even then the poor woman would scarcely let her go; so many questions and doubts and fears remained to trouble and alarm her.

“You will come again soon?” said she, anxiously.

“Yes, very soon.”

“God bless and reward you, Miss Grace, for all your kindness to me. I shall long to see you again, and to hear more of the Saviour. Shall I ever be able to say *my* Saviour?”

“Every one may say so, Ann, who will come to Christ, and make him their whole trust and confidence. But now you must rest and try to get some quiet sleep.”

“No,” replied the woman, “I will try and remember all that you have told me.”

Grace parted from her in silence; and having summoned Susan to accompany her, returned home with a heart full of hope and thankfulness. She forgot that she was lame, and, smiling within herself, saw not the pitying looks which followed her as she passed through the crowded streets. She forgot every thing but the happy change which she hoped

had been wrought in the awakening mind of Ann Harvey. Could Grace have heard what she was at that moment saying to Susan's mother, (who had come in to see if she wanted any thing,) she would have had a still deeper cause for thankfulness.

"To-day," said Ann, "when Miss Grace bent over me, with her sweet face, talking so kindly, and looking so patient and happy, while she spoke of her Saviour's love, I felt for the first time that there must be something in religion."

Meanwhile Grace thought within herself, "Oh that aunt Alice were but here! I feel unworthy to speak of Christ; and yet how can I be silent, remembering all that he has done for me?"

"Is your patient better?" asked Phebe, looking up as Grace entered, her countenance flushed with exercise and pleasure.

"No, not better in health; but—"

"But what, Grace?"

"I think—I hope—that she is at length beginning to take some interest in religious things."

"I am glad to hear that," said Caroline, "since there is no prospect that she will ever recover."

“And yet, dear cousin, we must all die some day or other; and God only knows how soon, or how suddenly.”

“I declare you are enough to give one the horrors,” exclaimed Caroline, with a shudder. “But it is no wonder that you get such gloomy notions, spending so much time as you do with that poor sick woman, who can be nothing to you or any one else.”

“True,” said Grace, “she has not a single friend in the world.”

“I am sure it is very good in you,” observed Phebe.

“No, not good in me, Phebe; for it is really a pleasure to have some one to be kind to.”

“But we need not go from home to enjoy it,” said Caroline.

Grace was about to reply severely, but she checked herself, and turned away in silence.

“I do not think that Grace does go from home,” observed Phebe, in a low voice to her sister. “Have you forgotten how kind she was to Willie?”

“How foolish in me,” thought Grace, as she retired to her own room to take off her bonnet and shawl—“how foolish in me to think of any thing to-day but Ann Harvey!”

CHAPTER XV.

GRACE did not now stay away from church on account of the heat or the pain which it gave her to sit for so many hours, although the latter was often great; and when they happened to be later than usual—for her cousins were not very punctual—she did not now refuse to accompany them because their pew was at the farther end of the church and she did not like to walk up the aisle with her crutch. Her clear voice was heard in the whispered thanksgiving “We bless thee for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all, for thine inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory.” Its tones mingled joyfully in the hymn of love and praise. Truly, and with all her heart, could Grace sing—

“How sweet the name of Jesus sounds!”

thankfully could she repeat—

“Rock of Ages, cleft for me!”

together with several other beautiful hymns.

And many, when they noticed, (or heard others notice,) how regular the little lame girl was in her attendance, let the weather be what it would—and how attentive, and, above all, how cheerful she appeared—began to feel ashamed of their own neglect, and perchance of their own unthankfulness to God.

But Grace was really much more feeble than she appeared. Several times lately she felt scarcely able to remain till the service was over; and once she actually fainted, and had to be carried home. But she forebore to complain, lest her aunt should object to her going, which would have been a sad loss, for she was wont to call the Sabbath “her happy day.” We all know what a pleasure it is to hear any one talking of a person whom we dearly love, and have lost, perhaps, either by death or absence; and how we hang upon the words which they uttered, and follow them in imagination to the places they frequented, keeping record of the good which they did; and how anxious we are to learn what we can do to please them, and to testify our unchanging affection. And thus it was that Grace felt towards the Saviour, who had done such great things for her; loving much, because so much had been forgiven; and delighting to listen to his words and learn his

will—the will of her Friend and Father in heaven.

Once, when some one remarked to Mrs. Harrington how much Grace was altered and how attentive she had become to her religious duties, her aunt replied—

“Yes, poor thing! religion is every thing to her now.”

“Poor thing!” repeated her visitor, compassionately.

Grace, who was sitting near enough to overhear what passed, smiled involuntarily, a happy smile. Was she to be pitied? Oh, surely not. Thus it is that God overrules evil for good, bringing light out of darkness, and promoting, through and by long affliction, the spiritual and eternal welfare of the afflicted. Thus it is that through poverty, sickness, humiliation, or the loss of friends, he weans us from the world, brings us nearer to himself, and makes religion our all in all. Truly it may be said, that “whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth.”

When Grace found how deeply anxious Ann Harvey had become concerning her spiritual state, and when she listened to her eager questions, her bewildering doubts and fears, oftentimes without being able to answer or explain

them, she was humbled at her own want of experience; and not knowing to whom to apply, entreated Susan's mother to call upon the clergyman of the parish, and tell him that a poor dying woman would be glad to see and talk with him.

Mrs. Grant did so; and Mr. Howard came the following morning, and spent some time reading and praying with Ann. His manner was kind and encouraging, as befitted a minister of Christ—the minister of “glad tidings,” who feels that his mission is to bind up the broken-hearted, to revive the spirit of the humble and contrite ones, and lead them gently to that merciful Redeemer who is able and willing to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him.

The next time Mr. Howard called, Grace happened to be there; and she remained, at Ann's earnest request. How happy she felt, listening to the low tones of the aged minister, and watching the changeful and hopeful expression that passed over the countenance of the sick woman! How much that was said seemed to be meant for her as well as Ann! And what a privilege it was to join in prayer to the throne of grace; for she had never prayed before, except in church, or alone in her own little

chamber. Mr. Howard was much interested by her appearance and evident ill-health ; and it was not long before Ann had confided Grace's little history to her new friend.

"O sir !" said she, "if you had but seen Miss Grace when she was a child, and before—before my carelessness made her what she is. The ladies used to stop me in the street to admire her, she was so beautiful."

"The good are always beautiful," said Mr. Howard.

"Yes, sir, very likely ; but the worst of it is, that people do not always think so. It is a hard trial for her, poor thing."

Mr. Howard felt that it was, and his heart yearned towards the orphan cripple. Every day, Ann grew weaker and weaker : but as her bodily health declined, her faith became clearer and stronger ; so that, looking to Jesus, she no longer feared to die.

"All this happiness," said she one day to Grace,—*"all this happiness I owe to you."*

"Under God," suggested Mr. Howard, gently.

"Yes, sir, it was God who sent her to me."

Grace could not speak : she thought of the time when she had murmured because she could

do nothing, and had even wished herself dead ; she recalled to mind all the goodness and long-forbearance of her heavenly Father ; and then remembering her own sins and provocations, her heart melted with love and gratitude.

“ Mr. Howard has been very kind to me,” said Ann, gratefully ; “ but it was you, Miss Grace, who first thought of asking him to call. It was you that first taught me to take an interest in heavenly things ; it was your words, and still more your actions to one who had so injured you, that first made me feel that there was a reality in religion. I owe every thing, under God, to you.”

Grace kissed her silently, for her heart was too full for words ; and then hurried away.

“ Will Ann recover after all ? ” asked Susan, glancing into the bright face of her young mistress, as they walked home together.

“ No, Mr. Howard does not think that she can live the week out.”

Susan turned away with a disappointed air, wondering in that case what could make Miss Grace look so pleased.

“ To be sure,” said she, aloud, “ it will be a happy release, poor thing ! ”

“ Yes, Susan, she will soon be in that blessed land where there is no more sorrow nor sigh-

ing, and where God himself will wipe away all tears from her eyes."

Grace was glad to be alone, that she might think over what had passed during the last few weeks. "Oh, if I had followed the first suggestions of my own evil heart, and not gone to see Ann Harvey," thought she, "how different every thing would have been! But it was God's grace alone that enabled me to overcome them. May that same grace keep me humble now! God could have chosen what instrument he liked: how good and condescending to make use of one so utterly unworthy! To him, and him only, be all the glory." And bowing down her head upon her hands, she remained lost in sweet meditation.

"Good news!" exclaimed Phebe, bursting into the apartment; (for there is always a sympathy in glad tidings which makes us long to communicate them to others.) "But you know it, by that smile."

"No, indeed; pray tell me, dear Phebe;" and Grace endeavoured to recall and fix her wandering thoughts upon what her cousin was saying.

"Good news! especially to you."

"What, more happiness!" exclaimed Grace.

"Aunt Alice is coming back. Mother had

a letter this morning, and she will be with us in little more than a week. Are you not glad?"

"Yes, indeed! You might well call it good news. And how kind in you to come and tell me, Phebe."

"I thought you would be pleased."

"Pleased! I am the happiest girl in the world;" and unable to contain herself any longer, Grace burst into tears.

Phebe thought it very natural that her cousin should even weep for joy at the hope of once more beholding her dearest—and something in her conscious heart whispered to her—her only friend! For she remembered how unkind both Caroline and herself frequently were to poor Grace.

"I am glad that she is coming back, for your sake," said Phebe, gently. "I sometimes think," added she, with a smile, "that you are aunt Alice's favourite, and feel half-inclined to be jealous of you."

"She loves us all," said Grace; "and if she appears kinder to me, it is out of pity."

"What should make her pity you?" asked Phebe, who felt a rebuke in her cousin's words that was not intended.

"Because I am lame—and—and often ill, and ill-tempered, also, Phebe, which is still

worse: so dear aunt Alice used to pity, and try and make me better."

"She has made you better," said Phebe. "Caroline and I have both noticed it, although we are cross to you sometimes; but you are seldom cross with us now, Grace."

"You must not say that, my dear cousin; it was only this morning—"

"But then I provoked you," interrupted Phebe; "so it was my fault."

"No, it was I who was fretful and impatient, and, as Caroline said, just in the humour to take offence at every little trifle. But indeed I was in great pain, and that helped to make me irritable."

"Are you in pain now?"

"No," answered Grace; "or, if so, I am too happy to be conscious of it: only I have a strange feeling here in my heart; it always beats violently if any thing agitates me very much; and such a feeling comes over me sometimes, you cannot think, dear Phebe—just as if it would cease all at once."

"Have you told mother?"

"Yes, I mentioned it to her; and she says it is weakness."

"But you are stronger than you used to be, or you would not be able to walk so much."

“I think the will has a great deal to do with that,” replied Grace, smiling. “I do not suppose that I shall ever be very strong:”—and she paused suddenly.

“Well,” said Phebe, “what were you going to say?”

The natural language of Grace’s heart, filled as it was at that moment with love and gratitude, would have been to add, “God’s will be done:” but she felt that she was speaking to one who did not understand her, and to whom it would have sounded unnatural, and timidity kept her silent.

That night, when Grace laid her head upon the pillow, she said within herself, “What a happy day this has been!” and she almost longed for the morning to come again, that she might have an opportunity of speaking and acting kindly to her cousins, and going to see poor Ann Harvey. Alas! we know not what a day or an hour may bring forth!

CHAPTER XVI.

THE following morning, when Grace came down to breakfast, she found no one in the room but her cousins, who both looked as if they had been crying a great deal; for their cheeks were pale, and their eyes swollen and heavy. Upon her eagerly inquiring the cause, Caroline replied that it was nothing that need concern her; while Phebe only answered by a fresh burst of tears.

“Oh, do tell me, my dear Phebe! I may at least be able to comfort you.”

“No one can do that,” exclaimed Phebe, passionately.

“Is aunt Alice ill?” inquired Grace, after a pause.

“Not that I know of. It is nothing that need concern you. And aunt Alice is the only person you care about in the world.”

“Oh yes, I care for you, Phebe; and would love and soothe you, if you would let me.”

“I do not want your love,” said her cousin, impatiently. “You may go away, as father says you will.”

“Go away!” repeated the bewildered Grace. But she did not like to distress and irritate her cousins by asking any more questions, and began to eat her breakfast in silence. She knew that Mrs. Harrington was not ill, because the servant had said that she was in the library with her husband; and was wholly at a loss to account for the sudden and unusual agitation which pervaded the whole household. After a few more vain efforts to win the confidence of her cousins, and assure them of her sympathy, Grace retired to her own apartment, and left them together. It was impossible to be angry when they were so unhappy: but Grace felt hurt, nevertheless; for, to a loving heart, it is almost as great a luxury to be permitted to weep with those who weep as to rejoice with those who rejoice. Not knowing what to do with herself, she was about to summon Susan, and pay an early visit to Ann Harvey, when the girl entered the room with a sorrowful countenance.

“This is a sad thing, Miss Grace!” said she.

Poor Grace did not like to appear ignorant of that with which the very servants were acquainted; and she scarcely knew whether it was right to avail herself of the information thus obtained.

“What a shock it must have been for Mrs. Harrington!” continued the girl, encouraged by her silence. “They say that she had no more idea of it, until last evening, than a child unborn. She and Mr. Harrington have been up all night arranging about the voyage, I suppose.”

“The voyage!” repeated Grace, involuntarily.

“What, do not you know, Miss Grace, that Mr. Harrington has lost all his property, and that he is going to India? And the servants are to be dismissed, and the house and furniture sold. And God knows what will become of the mistress, and all of you,” added the faithful girl, bursting into tears.

“He will take care of us, Susan. But leave me now. I shall not go to see Ann Harvey at present.”

Susan left the room in tears, but her young mistress was too much shocked and grieved to weep. Notwithstanding the faith which she had professed, and which she really felt, her notions of poverty were vague and full of terror; while the idea of her uncle’s leaving them and going away so long a distance, seemed to be worse than all the rest. “My cousins could not have known what they

were saying," thought she, "when they told me just now that this did not concern me. But it is no wonder; for if I feel it so deeply, what must they do?"

As soon as she had become a little more composed, Grace went down stairs as usual, for fear her cousins should think that she was ill-tempered, or offended with them. "As if that could be," murmured she, "when I know how unhappy they are."

When Grace entered the breakfast-room, she found that her aunt and uncle were also there: the former was talking earnestly to her daughters, who evidently endeavoured to conquer their own grief in order that they might not add to hers; while the latter held a newspaper in his hand, which completely concealed his countenance from observation.

"May I come in?" asked Grace, hesitatingly.

"Yes, certainly, my dear Grace," replied her aunt. "I was about to send for you. I should have done so before, only—only I cannot think of any thing this morning."

Grace took the hand which was extended to her, and pressed it silently to her lips.

"You have heard, I suppose," began Mrs.

Harrington; but Grace interrupted her with affectionate quickness.

“Yes, aunt, I know all; and I am so sorry!”

“My only comfort is,” continued Mrs. Harrington, touched by her gentle sympathy, “that you will not be a sufferer by this calamity. It would have been hard indeed, if it had fallen upon you.”

“I do not understand you, aunt.”

“I mean to say that your fortune is safe.”

“Yes, thank God,” exclaimed Mr. Harrington; “not a shilling of it has been touched.”

“I am so glad!” said Grace, clasping her hands together. “Have I very much, dear uncle?”

Mr. Harrington named the exact sum, which did indeed seem very much to Grace; so much that, for a few moments, its magnitude overwhelmed her.

“It has been found necessary,” continued Mrs. Harrington, while her voice trembled, “for your uncle to go to India, to look after the remnant of his property there in person. And as it will not be worth while to keep up this large establishment during his absence, we intend taking a small house out of town; and have thought it best for you to reside, for the present, with your other guardian, Sir

Charles Medwin, who has lately returned from abroad, and will no doubt be happy to receive you."

"Grace," said Mr. Harrington, putting down his newspaper, and drawing the bewildered girl towards him, "you are too old to be treated like a child. The fact of the matter is, that my love of speculation, my weakness and extravagance, have been the ruin of my family. Every thing in the house at this moment belongs to my creditors; and in future, instead of keeping half a dozen servants, it will be well if we can afford to keep one. At Sir Charles Medwin's you will not only enjoy the comforts and luxuries to which you have been accustomed, and to which your fortune entitles you, but also have an introduction into the first society. Do you understand me, Grace?"

"Yes, uncle," replied Grace, "I understand you perfectly. But do you think that I could have the heart to leave you, now that you are poor and unhappy, and after all your kindness to me? that is, if you will let me stay."

"I am afraid that you have not much kindness to thank us for, my poor child," replied her uncle, turning away his head; while his daughters felt ashamed and conscience-stricken.

"Oh yes, indeed! I have been so happy

here—so very happy! Do not send me away from you, dear aunt. I want no other society than that of Caroline and Phebe, and little Willie.”

“What do you say, girls?” asked Mr. Harrington, turning with a meaning look to his daughters; but neither spoke.

“O cousins!” said Grace; “I know that I have not deserved your love; but I did not know until this morning how utterly I had lost it.”

“No, it is not that,” answered Phebe; “but somehow I am ashamed to ask you to stay with us, Grace, after the way in which we have always treated you; and especially now, when there can be no possible inducement.”

“Only say that you love me, Phebe, or that you will try to love me,” said Grace. “I want no stronger inducement than that.”

“It is right that you should be informed, Grace,” observed her uncle, “that, until you come of age, a considerable sum out of the interest of your fortune is paid to whichever of your guardians you choose to reside with.”

“Oh! not only a portion,” exclaimed Grace, clasping Mr. Harrington’s neck for the first time in her life, “but all—every penny! Take it, dear uncle, and remain at home with us.”

“God bless you, my child!” said Mr. Har-

rington, "but it is not practicable, even if I could allow it. I must go to India, because it is my duty, and perhaps, after all, things may not turn out so badly as we have feared. As for you, I leave you until this evening to consider your future course, and your aunt will explain to you meanwhile the numerous advantages which you must sacrifice by remaining with us."

Mr. Harrington left the room abruptly, as if fearing to trust himself to say more; and conscientiously did his wife perform the duty required of her: but Grace never wavered from her first decision. After all, as she said, it was no sacrifice to her to live quietly with Mrs. Harrington, rather than with her more wealthy guardian. It was not as if she had cared about going to balls and parties; instead of which she was really happier at home—oh, far happier with them—than she could ever be among strangers.

"So you will let me stay, dear aunt, will you not?" said Grace, at length.

"My child, I will be glad to have you with me, only that I fear I may be selfish."

"You hear, Phebe," exclaimed Grace, without noticing the last words. "Do tell me that you are glad we are not to be separated."

"Yes, I am very glad;" and Phebe put her arm around her cousin's waist, and kissed her affectionately.

"And you, Caroline?"

Caroline embraced and kissed her in silence.

"Henceforth," said Grace, "we will no longer be cousins, but sisters—shall we? May I be your sister? And will you tell me all your little plans and troubles, just as you tell one another? I know that I am asking a great deal; but indeed I think that it would make us all happier."

"Yes," answered Phebe, "we will tell you every thing. There shall be no more secrets, no more estrangements between us. We will never quarrel again."

"If we can help it," added Caroline, smiling through her tears.

"But I will tell you a very good way to help it," said Grace. "Let us trust and bear with one another. If you or Phebe would but speak to me gently when you see me in one of my ill-humours—although I know that it is difficult to prevent being in an ill-humour too—but if you could do this, I should soon break myself of it. After all, it is not money but love that makes people happy. And if my dear uncle were not going away, we might be very happy,

notwithstanding our loss of fortune; happier than ever, perhaps, if it makes us love one another better."

"Why do you say *our* loss of fortune?" asked Caroline.

"Because I am one of you now, and both our joys and our sorrows are in common."

"I should like to know what you are thinking of, my dear Caroline," said her sister Phebe, a few hours afterwards, as they sat together in the deserted drawing-room, Grace having just received a summons to join her uncle in the library;—"or one, at least, of the many things which we have all to think of now. I am sure I never thought so much in my life as I have done to-day."

"I was thinking of Grace."

"Dear Grace!"

"Yes, this will prove her more than any thing else. Had she chosen to reside with Sir Charles Medwin, things would have been very different, father says, and that he doubts whether we could have afforded even to keep a servant; and Grace knows this. I confess that I do not like the idea of being under so much obligation to her. What if she should grow proud and overbearing again?"

"But she will not."

“I do not think that she owes us much gratitude,” said Caroline. “And I must own that I look back with shame, and forward with dread.”

“I, too, am sorry for the past,” observed Phebe; “but I have no fears for the future. Grace is better than we are.”

“She had need be,” said her sister, humbly; “but time will tell. It will be a hard trial for her.”

“We must help her to bear it,” exclaimed Phebe; “and we have promised to do so. We must not fancy things.”

“Well, I will not. But you know that Grace is apt to be proud: witness the manner in which she never fails to triumph over us whenever an opportunity offers for displaying her superior talents and accomplishments—for I grant that they are superior.”

“Yes,” replied Phebe; “but that is past, and we are all going to begin a new life.”

“A new life, indeed!” repeated her sister, sharply; and the conversation turned to sadder themes.

CHAPTER XVII.

DOCTOR GRENFIELD was glad of an excuse to call the next day and pay a friendly visit to the Harringtons, to whom his kind sympathy and advice were most valuable in the hour of trial; although he would in all probability have gone away again without remembering his original purpose in coming, but for the entrance of Caroline and her sister.

“I had quite forgotten!” exclaimed he, stopping short: “I came to see Grace Dermott.”

Phebe said that her cousin had gone out about an hour ago, taking Susan with her.

“Then I am too late. I would have saved her this shock, if I could. But in case that she should not be gone there, will you have the kindness to tell her that poor Ann Harvey died this morning, about three o’clock?”

“Ann Harvey!” repeated Mrs. Harrington.

“I thought you knew all about it, my dear madam. I hope that I have not been telling secrets.”

"I knew all about the poor woman to whom Grace has been so kind, and gone to see so frequently of late; but not her name. Ann Harvey was an old servant of my sister's, and the cause (through carelessness) of all poor Grace's lameness and deformity."

"Is it possible!" said Doctor Grenfield. "Bless her little heart! she never told me that."

Caroline and Phebe looked at one another with the tears in their eyes.

"Well, give my love to her," continued he, "and tell her that I owe her a good scolding for having deceived me. And tell her, if you please," added the worthy doctor, in a changed voice, "that Ann died very happily and peacefully, looking to Christ. I need not say," observed he, as Mrs. Harrington accompanied him from the room, "that if I can be of any service to you or the young people, it will give me the most sincere pleasure."

Mrs. Harrington thanked him gratefully, and felt strengthened by his kind and encouraging sympathy, to bear with greater fortitude the heavy trials that awaited her; although the language of her heart still was, "Any thing but this!" It is the common lament of the sorrowful. Happy are they who can say, albeit

with tears, "Thy will, O God, not mine, be done."

Grace was much shocked to hear of Ann's death, although she had been long aware that, in her weak and dying state, such an event might take place at any moment. She felt almost inclined at first to reproach herself for staying away, only that she remembered having had a good motive for it. And after all, her presence could have done no good, and she ought to be very thankful for what she had been permitted to do.

Susan's mother told her that Ann had guessed the cause of her absence, upon hearing of the change which had happened to Mr. Harrington; and that she had spoken very gratefully and affectionately about her a few hours before her death; repeating her assertion, that she owed all her present happiness and willingness to be taken whenever it should please God, entirely to Grace. She adverted also to the pains which Grace had taken with her, and her own coldness and hardness of heart, until it pleased God to make her the instrument by which it was at once broken and healed. Her last moments were calm and peaceful, but she was too weak to talk. When asked if Christ was precious to her, she raised herself up in the

bed with great effort, and replied in a clear, glad voice, "Very, very precious!" She died shortly afterwards, with a smile still resting on her countenance.

As Grace was crossing the street she was startled by hearing her own name pronounced, and looking up beheld Mr. Howard.

"So our labour of love is ended," said he, holding out his hand.

"Yes, sir," replied Grace, timidly, while the tears gathered in her eyes as she spoke,—“and happily ended.”

"Give God the glory. But I should be sorry to think that we were never to meet again."

Grace coloured, and remained silent.

"I am an old man," continued he, "almost alone in the world, and you are like one who was very dear to me once; she is dead now."

"Was she lame, sir?"

"No,—in features I mean. She was gentle and kind-hearted; and love for her Saviour taught her to be loving towards others. Her son is my ward, and I am looking out for a tutor for him: one who will combine the qualities of teacher and companion, for Walter inherits all his mother's delicacy of constitution, and is not able to study much. But I ought to apologize for troubling you about this."

“Not at all,” answered Grace, as she walked by his side, forgetful of her crutch, and even for the moment of poor Ann Harvey; while her face beamed with sympathy for the garrulous and benevolent old man.

Mr. Howard accompanied her to the door, but declined entering. From his last words, he was in all probability acquainted with the reverse that had fallen upon the family, and was doubtless unaware to what extent it might affect the interest of his young friend.

“Miss Dermott,” said he, “although in a measure strangers to one another, the circumstances under which we have met may surely warrant me in entreating, that if ever you want a friend, a father—if ever I can be of the slightest service to you—you will not hesitate to let me know. Both for her sake and your own, it would make me very happy to be of use to you.”

“You are very kind,” said Grace.

“And will you promise me this, Miss Dermott?”

Grace lifted up her eyes to his, and answered frankly, “Yes, I promise.”

“God bless you, my dear child!” said Mr. Howard; “and make you better and stronger,—that is, if it is his will.”

"Thank you, sir," said Grace; "but I am not ill." And they shook hands and parted.

Phebe met her in the hall. "Do not go upstairs yet," said she, drawing her gently into the parlour. "You must be tired, after your long walk." And making Grace sit down on the sofa, she unfastened her bonnet and cloak, and smoothed back her hair, with a longing desire to do something to show the affectionate regard with which her own heart was so full.

Grace kissed the hands that were so active for her comfort, while she looked up into her cousin's face with a tearful smile. "I shall not want to leave you any more," said she; "for my poor patient is dead."

"Yes, I know; Doctor Grenfield has been here and told us all about it. O Grace! I do love you now dearly! But I could not have done it. I could not have gone to see that wicked woman day after day, and read to her, and taken things to her, as you did."

"So I thought and felt at first, my dear Phebe; but, thank God, the feeling did not last long. Ann Harvey was not wicked; she was very sorry for the past."

"But the sorrow could not take away your lameness, Grace," interrupted her cousin, quickly.

“No, God only could have done that, had it pleased him, and had it been good for me.”

“Well, I must not say any more, since the poor woman is dead,” said Phebe. “Of course you are a great deal happier now, for having conquered your first bad feelings towards her. But I am not happy when I think of the many spiteful things that I have said to you when you have been going there.”

“Then do not think of them, my dear Phebe. Let us think only of our agreement for the future, and of dear aunt Alice’s return.”

“I declare I had almost forgotten aunt Alice. How different all things will be from what they were when she came back last !”

“Different indeed !” repeated Grace, with an inward thanksgiving.

“Poor Robert is also sent for. It will be a sad blow for him.”

“Poor Robert !” said Grace ; for she did not dread his coming now. “We must all console him as well as we can. Oh, what a comfort it is, my dear Phebe, to believe that every thing happens for the best, however difficult it may seem to think so at the time !”

“But I do not believe it !” replied Phebe, passionately. “And I never will believe that father’s losing all his property, and being

obliged to leave us, for years perhaps, can be for the best."

"It does appear hard now," said Grace, putting her arms affectionately round her cousin; "but I have known trials almost or quite as bitter, that were, after all, but blessings in disguise."

"You have known! Why, you are only a few months older than I am."

"I am a year older."

"A whole year!" repeated Phebe. "My dear Grace, what troubles can you have known?"

"O Phebe! am I not motherless and fatherless; lame, deformed, helpless, and constantly suffering? And yet all seems as nothing now, since—"

"Since when, my poor Grace?"

"Since I have known Christ. O my dearest cousin! we can bear and suffer any thing then, knowing it to come from Him who has borne and suffered so much for us."

"Forgive me," said Phebe, after a pause, "for saying what I did. I do pity you, Grace, very much, and love you also; but I likewise envy your sweet faith."

At that moment the first dinner-bell rang, and they separated in haste to their own apartments.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE return of aunt Alice was greeted with mingled smiles and tears. Notwithstanding her lameness, Grace was the first to meet and welcome her; but then, to be sure, her cousins did not make quite so much haste as they might have done, if Caroline had not placed her hand upon her sister's arm, and gently detained her. Phebe understood her, and waited for a moment before she bounded forward to share in the embrace of this dear relative. Miss Vernon kissed them all with much affection—little Willie taking good care not to be overlooked; and then went into her sister's room, where she remained with Mr. and Mrs. Harrington until tea-time. When they again appeared, the latter looked more cheerful than she had done since the first news of their reverses had reached her, and listened eagerly and hopefully to all Miss Vernon's plans for that future which she had hitherto regarded with dread.

"I knew," whispered Phebe to her sister, "that all would go right when aunt Alice came back. See, mother is actually smiling—and

well enough she may be—at the idea of our keeping even a pig.”

“I do not like pigs,” said little Willie, who was leaning on his mother’s knee. “They are such dirty creatures.”

“But you like rabbits and chickens, Willie,” observed Miss Vernon.

“Oh yes, yes!” exclaimed the delighted child. “Mother, may I have some real live rabbits in our new house, and feed them myself? We shall be so happy.”

Mrs. Harrington put her hand gently into that of her husband; while Caroline, who was leaning upon her father’s chair, bent over and kissed his forehead: but neither of them spoke.

“I had forgotten,” said Willie, thoughtfully, “that father was going away. But he will come back again—will you not, father? And the rabbits will be grown by that time; and the chickens, and the pig, and the flowers. You need not be afraid, Caroline, about father’s going so far from us; for cousin Grace says that God can watch over and take care of him just the same, if we ask him. And I mean to ask him every night in my prayers.”

“Grace is right,” said Miss Vernon; “and you are a good boy for remembering what she tells you.”

"I always remember what she tells me," answered Willie, "because I love her. Every one loves cousin Grace now."

Miss Vernon could scarcely believe, when she looked at Grace, that she could be the same pale, fretful, heavy-eyed girl whom she had first seen in that very room. Her brow, though slightly contracted from habitual suffering, wore, nevertheless, an expression of meek resignation, which it was touching to behold on so young a face. The haughty curl of the lip had given place to a quiet smile that was never absent for a long time together, even when there seemed to be nothing to smile at, as if it had grown there in spite of pain. She was still timid and reserved, but no longer proud; silent, but not sullen; while, instead of that restraint and awkwardness of manner which had been engendered by the fear of ridicule, she had become active and helpful to an extraordinary degree. A close observer might have still noticed a slight change of colour and an involuntary and nervous trembling when she fancied any one was looking at her, or when, either in consequence of this or her lameness, she actually committed any awkward blunder; but her ready laugh at herself was a great relief to others.

"Yes, Grace is indeed very much changed,"

said Mrs. Harrington, noticing her sister's glance; "but she has been looking pale for the last few weeks."

"I am very well, thank you, aunt."

"The country air will do us all good," said Miss Vernon, cheerfully.

Tired as she was with her long journey, Miss Vernon could not pass Grace's little room without going in, after her old custom, to kiss her and bid her "good night." Somehow Grace thought that she would come; and they had so much to say to one another, so much to thank God for, that it was late before they separated. Even then Grace could not sleep for the strong beating of her heart. It was always so now, when agitated or excited. But she was used to suffering and wakeful nights, and the memory of some of them came back to her as she lay thinking of the past.

She remembered the long night spent years ago in her father's sick chamber, when she had lain for hours in some painful attitude, fearing to stir or even breathe lest he should hear and send her from him; and after his death, when she was stricken with the fever, and heard her old nurse tell Mrs. Harrington what a mercy it would be if it would please God to take her. Above all, she recollected that long, long night

when she had dreamed that she was no longer lame or deformed, but dressed in white, and dancing, hand in hand, with a group of young and happy children like herself. The dream and its awakening, and the dreary hours that followed, seemed as vivid to her recollection as though it were but yesterday, together with the longing which she then had to close her eyes and never wake again !

She recalled to mind how often the pillow had been wet with her burning tears : how often she had crept out of bed, and kneeled down without daring to pray ; or stood in her restlessness, looking out into the silent night, and wondering what sort of beings inhabited those starry worlds, and whether any of them were sick or lame, and if so whether they bore it more patiently than she did. It is astonishing the strange thoughts that pass through the mind of a lonely and unhappy child. If we only knew half of them, it would serve to make us very gentle and kind to all such, and very anxious to lead them to that good Shepherd[†] who, while he bids the stronger and more healthy of his flock to hear his voice and to follow him, condescends to bear the poor lost and stricken ones upon his shoulder and in his bosom ; the very weakest, therefore, who trust

in Christ, need not fear lest they should be forgotten or left to perish.

It was morning before Grace closed her eyes; and yet the time had not appeared so very long. "Blessed be His name!" exclaimed she; "he giveth songs in the night."

Under the active superintendence of Miss Vernon, a small house was taken at a short distance from town, the servants dismissed, and the establishment broken up. Mrs. Harrington wished to keep Susan to wait, as usual, on Grace, who was naturally, from her misfortune, more helpless than her cousins, besides being justly entitled, under the circumstances, to any little extra indulgence; but Grace would not hear of such a thing.

"There must be no difference between us," said she, "and then we shall be better able to sympathize with one another in all our little trials and troubles, or laugh over them, which will be better still; and if I am really at a loss, I will ask Phebe to help me until I have learned to help myself." Phebe cheerfully promised her assistance, and no more was said on the subject.

Naturally of a gentle and yielding disposition, and feeling that she also had been to blame for much useless expenditure, and what now appeared to be many thoughtless extrava-

gances, Mrs. Harrington, although she deeply felt the change in their circumstances, and even more for her children's sake than her own, never suffered a murmuring word to escape her lips, nor was she heard to utter a single complaint at the loss of those comforts and luxuries to which she had been accustomed. Caroline and Phebe endeavoured as far as possible to follow her example, although the latter found it more difficult than the former; while Grace felt a strange pleasure in making a thousand little nameless sacrifices of her own comfort to that of others—evidences of that deep love to God which filled her whole heart, and was continually finding vent in kind words and acts. It is sweet to know that God does not despise these little daily sacrifices, these freewill offerings, presented in the name of Jesus Christ, and made for his sake and with a view to his glory.

We have already said that Miss Vernon was not rich : she had sufficient, however, for her own simple wants, and also to prevent her from being a burden to others; and she cheerfully consented to take up her abode with her sister and the children, at least for the present, which was a great relief to Mr. Harrington, and a source of general rejoicing among the younger members of the family.

Robert's return (notwithstanding the cause) likewise afforded much pleasure to his sisters ; and there was nothing in his affectionate greeting, or his manner, especially towards his father, to mark the grief and disappointment which weighed so heavily on his spirits, arising from the necessity for his so suddenly abandoning his darling studies. But following the example of the rest, he uttered no complaint ; and even assumed an appearance of cheerfulness that deceived everybody but Miss Vernon.

The future prospects of his eldest son had troubled Mr. Harrington more than any thing else. He had been proud of Robert's high classical attainments, and pleased with his intense devotion to his studies : but now these things only added to his grief ; for it was impossible that he could remain at college, and equally impossible to think of his accepting the situation offered him in the counting-house of one of Mr. Harrington's old friends, where his whole time would be occupied in making out invoices, and reckoning up long accounts. Much to his surprise, however, Robert accepted it at once.

“ Perhaps, as you say, my dear father,” he observed, “ things may yet turn out better than we hope for ; and if not, the salary, small as it is, will be useful to my mother and sisters.”

Mr. Harrington looked eagerly into his son's face.

"Well, sir," said Robert, with a forced smile, "what is it?"

"Nothing; only I was afraid—"

"That I should not be steady enough—eh, father?"

"No, no, not that. God bless you, my dear boy!" and pressing Robert's hand, he quitted the room abruptly.

"God help me!" exclaimed Robert, with strong emotion; and sinking into a chair, he covered his face with his hands.

"God will help you," said a gentle voice by his side. It was the voice of aunt Alice. "Nay, do not start: I think I know all that is passing in your mind, all its struggles and self-sacrifices; and also the comfort which they have brought to your poor father, who has enough to bear."

"But must I go, aunt Alice? Must I leave my pursuits and my hopes?"

"You have decided for yourself, and decided rightly. But, after all," added Miss Vernon, "it may not be very long."

"Thank you for letting me even hope," said Robert. "Oh, it is hard, very hard! But there, it cannot be helped; and all that I have to do is to put a good face on the matter. One

sufferer is enough, in all conscience—two at least,” added he, looking into the sympathizing countenance of his kind relative. “You will not betray me, aunt Alice?”

“Certainly not, my dear boy; I would rather comfort and strengthen you if I could.”

“And my father really thinks that I can abandon all my bright dreams for the future, without a sigh, without a moment’s regret, and go and shut myself contentedly up in an old counting-house for the rest of my life? Well, it is best so. My poor father! you can never have loved books, and knowledge, and freedom, as I have done:” and the youth bowed down his head upon his hands and wept.

Miss Vernon spoke gently and soothingly to him, striving to set before him a higher motive even than filial obedience, and to lead him to higher sources of consolation. But it was evident that Robert listened more out of love for his aunt than for her “sermon,” as he would have called it; and paid more attention to the faint hope which she held out relative to his father’s India property than any thing else. He thanked her, nevertheless, and asked her to assist him in maintaining that assumed cheerfulness of manner which seemed to be such an evident relief to the mind of his father.

CHAPTER XIX.

WE will pass over the parting scene between Mr. Harrington and his family; and how the anguish of the former was lightened by their affectionate sympathy. The heavy affliction of those beloved ones whom he left behind was partly dissipated by the bustle and excitement attendant on a change of residence, and the absolute necessity for exertion. There was a novelty in their new position which prevented them from feeling its many embarrassments and privations so much as they would otherwise have done. And then it was summer; and there was the garden to tend, borders to be dug and flower-seeds sown, and Willie's rabbits to feed: and when evening came, they took long and pleasant walks together in the green fields and lanes; and, as Phebe said, but for Mr. Harrington's absence and the thought that Robert must soon leave them also, they would have been quite happy.

In consequence of the smallness of the house, Grace had been compelled—or rather she had consented, for Mrs. Harrington merely hinted at the convenience of such an arrange-

ment—to let Phebe share her room. It was almost the greatest sacrifice that Grace could have made, but she endeavoured to do it cheerfully.

“I hope I shall not disturb you, my dear cousin,” said she, timidly, when the first night came, and Phebe made haste to lay her weary head on the pillow; “but I always make it a rule to read a little before I go to bed.”

“But are you not tired?”

“Yes, I am rather, but not very,” replied Grace, removing the lamp to the farther end of the room, and carefully pinning the curtains together, so as to keep out the light from her cousin’s eyes.

“Oh! never mind me,” said Phebe; “I shall be asleep in a moment.”

Grace tried to collect her thoughts, and to forget that she was not alone, while she read a chapter as usual in her little Bible, and then kneeled down and prayed; after which she got into bed as softly as she could, and found Phebe already fast asleep.

A few nights afterwards, Phebe told her cousin that she need not take the trouble to pin the curtain, as the light did not disturb her; and she used often to lie and watch the varied expressions which passed over Grace’s pale face

as she read. Sometimes Phebe dropped asleep while watching her, or after the light had been extinguished Grace kneeled down by the side of the bed to pray; and very often she wondered what she could have to pray about for so long a time, when Miss Vernon always had family prayer before they separated.

Oh, how many things there are, when night comes, that the young Christian has to confess and to ask forgiveness for of his heavenly Father, for Christ's sake! How many things have been left undone that ought to have been done, and how many done that ought not to have been done; how much to be prayed for, and prayed against; how many sins to be deplored; how many dear ones to be remembered at the throne of grace; how many of the poor and sick and unconverted, and those who never pray for themselves! And what a happy privilege it is to be permitted to spread all our wants and sorrows before God, and, humbly confessing our sins, lie down to sleep with the peaceful assurance that we have been heard and forgiven!

"I wish that you would read aloud for once," said Phebe, a few weeks after their arrival; "I am not at all sleepy to-night."

Grace willingly consented; but her cousin

fell asleep, nevertheless, before the chapter was concluded. The following night, Grace asked, with a smile—

“Shall I read to you again, Phebe?”

“Yes, if you will. I am afraid that I did not hear quite all last night; but I will try and pay more attention.”

Grace selected a chapter full of interest; and Phebe actually remained awake until her prayers were finished, to ask something about it which she did not exactly understand. After which they lay talking on the subject for an hour or more. From that night she gradually became more attentive, and began at last to look forward with interest to these quiet readings, and to feel the necessity of private as well as family prayer. The latter is both a duty and privilege; but the former a comfort and delight. All this, however, was the work of time; and it is necessary that we should go back again in our little history to the period which had been fixed for Robert to enter upon his new duties.

Since Mr. Harrington's departure he had either been less careful in concealing his grief, or his mother had found time to be more observant, and so guessed its cause, notwithstanding the assumed carelessness of his manner whenever the subject was touched upon.

“I do not see the absolute necessity of your leaving home at present, my dear boy,” said Mrs. Harrington. “Could you not manage to study here, and get on as well as you can, by the aid of your books, until we see how things turn out?”

“What! live upon you, mother, and eat your bread, when even my sister Caroline talks of preparing herself for a situation as governess? That will never do; I would sooner beg.”

“But cannot something else be thought of, my son?”

“No, mother dear. I have thought of every thing. At present I know too much, and too little. As aunt Alice says, there is no help for it, but patience and hope; and I have none of the first and very little of the last.”

Grace lingered near him until Mrs. Harrington had left the room, which she did shortly afterwards.

“Robert,” said she, very softly, “I think I could help you, if you would let me. What would you like to do, if you really must leave home?”

“I should like, above all things, to be tutor in a school or family; but I am too young for that.”

“Stay!” exclaimed Grace, clasping her

hands with a sudden joy; "I have just thought of something. Did you say that you should like to be a tutor?"

"Yes; but you cannot purchase that for me, Grace."

"But I may get it, nevertheless; only I am not sure, it is so long since." And she proceeded to relate her parting interview with Mr. Howard; and how he had spoken to her of his wish to procure a tutor and companion for his young ward; and, finally, how she had promised to write and let him know if ever he could be of service to her.

"And will you write, dear Grace—now—this minute?"

"Not this minute," answered Grace. "I do not feel quite able; but I will be sure and write by this post."

"You are determined that I shall owe every thing to you," said Robert, gratefully.

"Yes, I should like it; that is, if it is God's will. But we must not set our hearts too much on this, dear cousin, for fear of being disappointed."

Robert felt that it would indeed be a disappointment; and they agreed together not to tell any one of this new plan, except aunt Alice: Grace feeling quite sure that she could

not keep a secret from her, even if she were to try. It was difficult enough to be silent when she heard Caroline and Phebe lamenting to each other that only one week remained of their dear brother's stay; or when Robert's mother uttered some sad regret, and Robert himself looked up in her face with a bright, hopeful glance, to which she scarcely dared respond, for fear of encouraging hopes that would never be realized.



CHAPTER XX.

“A LETTER for cousin Grace!” exclaimed Willie, bounding into the little sitting-room, a few days after Grace’s conversation with her cousin, and before she had even begun to hope for an answer to her application.

“Nonsense!” said Caroline. “Why, Grace does not know any one—any one, at least, who would be likely to write to her.”

“I tell you that it is directed to Miss Dermott,” persisted her little brother, putting the letter into the hand of the real owner. “Your name is not Dermott, is it?”

“Well, you need not be so cross, Willie.”

The boy did not reply, or even hear what his sister was saying, his glance being fixed on the pale face of his cousin, who, having hastily glanced over the letter which he had brought her, laid it down, and burst into tears.

“My dear Grace!” exclaimed Mrs. Harrington, crossing the room to where she sat; while Caroline put aside her work, and came forward with a look of affectionate sympathy.

“Do not say any thing to her just now, mother,” whispered Robert. And kneeling down

before his cousin, he added, kindly—"Never mind, dearest; it cannot be helped. You have done what you could, and now I will perform my part, and go cheerfully to my duty. You shall hear no more complaints. Do not cry, Grace. I am not so very much disappointed. As you say, every thing is for the best."

Grace looked into his face, and smiled at him through her tears. "No, it is not that, dear cousin," said she, as soon as she could speak. "But I am so happy—and so foolish not to bear it better. Read it yourself, Robert."

Robert took the letter, and, having rapidly run his eye over it, flung it up in the air with a shout of joy that completed the bewilderment of his mother and sister.

"Congratulate me, mother! congratulate me, Caroline!" exclaimed Robert. "I am not to spend my young days in employments so different from those I have been taught to love; but proceed with my studies, and even have masters, if necessary, together with a salary, every shilling of which I will send home. And here," added he, flinging his arms round Grace, "here is the good fairy who has wrought this change."

Explanations followed; and Grace received Mrs. Harrington's grateful thanks and Caroline's affectionate embrace like one in a dream,

while little Willie hung around her neck and kissed her because the others did.

“And all this,” said Phebe, as soon as she heard of it, “comes of your having gone to see that Ann Harvey.”

“O Phebe!” interrupted Grace.

“Well, I will not say any thing to vex you; for I am sure that we none of us ought.”

Grace escaped from their congratulations as soon as she could, and went and lay down quietly in her own room. Aunt Alice, when she entered softly, about an hour afterwards, thought that she was asleep, until she opened her eyes and smiled upon her.

“Are you ill?” asked she.

“No, aunt; I was only thinking.”

“And what were you thinking of, Grace?”

“Of what should I think but of God’s goodness and loving-kindness to me? ‘Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation.’ O aunt! it is all his doing. All is ordered by him. I am nothing, and I desire to be nothing, that Christ may be every thing. ‘He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters’—the waters of quietness. ‘He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow

of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.' ”

Grace seldom spoke much, but her heart was full of gratitude and joy. “Aunt Alice,” continued she, putting her arms round the neck of this dear friend as she bent over her, “you will think me very silly if I tell you something.”

“Tell me, nevertheless, dearest.”

“It is about my name. There was a time when I used to shrink from the very sound, and start and colour when any one called me suddenly by it. It seemed a mockery. And when my cousins announced me, and said to their young companions, ‘This is Grace,’ I have often felt ready to sink with pain and mortification. But now it seems to be the very name for me. Can you tell why, aunt?”

“Yes,” said Miss Vernon, “I think I can:

“‘Grace, ’tis a charming sound.’”

Her companion smiled.

“Oh that beautiful hymn!” exclaimed she, repeating the concluding verses:

“‘Grace led my roving feet
To tread the heavenly road;
And new supplies, each hour, I meet,
While pressing on to God.

‘Grace all the work shall crown,
Through everlasting days;
It lays in heaven the topmost stone
And well deserves the praise.’”

And there is another hymn, aunt Alice, only I forget it just at this moment, beginning,

“ ‘Jesus, I sing thy matchless grace
That calls a worm thine own.’ ”

Oh yes, Grace is the very name for me !”

“ And not only for you, but for all of us, my dear child,” replied Miss Vernon, kissing her affectionately. “ Now lie still and rest, and presently I will send you up your dinner.”

“ I am not tired, indeed, aunt ; for I have not been walking to-day, nor doing any thing to weary me. They will think that I am ill if I do not go down. Besides, Robert will want to ask me so many questions about Mr. Howard.”

“ Well, do as you please.”

When Miss Vernon left her, she went to her desk and wrote immediately to ask Doctor Grenfield if he would have the kindness to call the first time that he was passing by. The good doctor came shortly afterwards, for Grace was a particular favourite of his ; and under the pretence of paying them a friendly visit he had the opportunity of making his own observations, which were far more favourable than Miss Vernon, in her anxiety, had anticipated. “ She is very weak,” said he, “ and I much fear that she has some complaint of the heart, in which case any sudden or violent excitement might be fatal ; but otherwise there is no dan-

ger : and perhaps, after all, it is only weakness ; and quiet and country air may soon restore her. Of course we can never expect her to be very strong ; but I see no reason to fear but what, if it be God's will, she may yet live many years. I am sure I hope so !" added the doctor, brushing away a tear from his eyes. "She has never quite recovered from the fatigue of nursing her little cousin Willie, when he was so ill with fever."

Miss Vernon felt greatly relieved, and thanked him for his kindness in coming. And so did Grace, without knowing why ; but somehow she was always glad to see him, and felt thankful for the interest which he evidently took in her welfare.

Robert, who was sure that his father, so far from objecting, would rejoice in the change that had taken place in his future prospects, wrote immediately and gratefully declined the situation which had been offered him, explaining his reasons for not having done so before ; which frank avowal elicited one of sincere congratulation from his father's old friend. Nothing remained but to fix the day of his departure for Mr. Howard's. As Grace had anticipated, her cousin had a thousand questions to ask as to what sort of a man he was, and whether he seemed to be very strict.

“I do not know exactly what you mean by strict,” answered Grace. “He always appeared to be very kind and good-humoured.”

“But do you think that he will be always preaching? Of course, being a clergyman, he must preach in the pulpit, but I should hate to hear nothing but preaching, you know. But, Grace, I want you to tell me what made Mr. Howard take such a fancy to you.”

“From my resemblance, I believe, to a dear friend whom he had known years ago, the mother of Walter Murray; but she was not lame, though.”

“In features and manner I suppose he meant. And if Walter is like his mother, I shall love him for the same reason.”

“I cannot imagine any one being like me.”

“And why not, Grace?”

“I mean, not exactly like me.”

“You are thinking of your lameness. But is it not strange, Grace? I never even notice it now; or if I do, it only serves to make you dearer to me. I would not exchange my little lame sister Grace for any one else in the world.”

“Would you not really, Robert? Then I do not mind being lame.”

“Silly child! as if that could make any difference. To be sure I did not always like you as well as I do now; but then it was because—”

“Because I was cross and ill-humoured,” interrupted Grace; “and foolish enough to imagine that it was my misfortune, and not my fault, that made every one shun me: and so dared to murmur against God, when the real cause of all my grief lay in my own unhappy temper.”

“But that is past now.”

“No, not past, but passing, I humbly hope. You will write to us, Robert, and tell us how you like Mr. Howard and Walter, and whether you are comfortable.”

“Yes, I will write you a long letter, dear Grace, all to yourself.”

“But may not your sisters feel hurt at your writing to me, and not to them?”

“O Grace! do I not owe every thing to you?”

A few days afterwards, Robert left home full of health and spirits, and accompanied by the sincere good wishes of his friends, especially Grace, although she could not help weeping when he wished her farewell.

“What, tears!” said he, kissing them affectionately away. “That is a bad omen.”

“Forgive me, Robert.”

At that moment the coach drove up to the door, and having again embraced his mother and sisters, not forgetting aunt Alice, Robert was soon far away.

CHAPTER XXI.

NOTWITHSTANDING her bodily infirmities, the faith of Grace increased daily, and she was continually realizing that blessed promise given in Hosea, "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord." She was no longer despairing. She could thank God for pain, and all that kept her nearer to himself. She could say smilingly, "Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight:" and feel that what seemeth good to God must be good for us; for he does not willingly afflict or grieve the children of men, but has a wise purpose to be worked out in all their sufferings—sufferings which are but for a moment, compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. Her prayer and her hope mingled together in the words of the Psalmist: "Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation.—Teach me to do thy will: for thou art my God."

And what was it that made Grace so happy? Not that she was faultless, for her sins were many, although she struggled against them,

and deplored them with tears of penitence ; not that she grew strong and active, for her bodily health evidently declined, and she was seldom entirely free from pain, or able to move about without difficulty ; not that she was beautiful, for Grace was pale, crippled, and deformed. It was because she knew that Christ was her Saviour, and that he loved her, and had given himself for her—the just for the unjust, that he might bring her unto God : because she knew that her sins were forgiven for his name's sake, and that in all her afflictions he was afflicted ; that the hour was coming when “this corruption must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality ;” and then should be brought to pass the saying that is written, “Death is swallowed up in victory”—victory over sin, and sorrow, and the grave,—through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Caroline had made many efforts to overcome her natural indolence ; and her progress, under the tuition of Miss Vernon, was steady, if not rapid. But her aunt could not undertake to advance her in those peculiar accomplishments in which, in pursuance of her plan of going out as a governess, Caroline was most anxious to excel. Phebe also endeavoured to cure herself of her faults, but they were faults of an

entirely different character; and it was want of application, rather than abilities, which kept her back.

“If I could only play as well as you do, Grace, how glad I should be!” said Phebe, one day.

“Yes, indeed,” added her sister; “my poor father was right in calling music an indispensable accomplishment.”

“But do you remember,” said Grace, “what my aunt observed at the time?—that some people have a natural genius for music; and that if I played better than you do, it was not because I took more pains, or practised more frequently, but because God had bestowed this gift upon me: just as aunt Alice was saying that he does upon the blind, as if to compensate for their loss of sight. And God’s gifts, although they may make us very thankful, can, or rather should, never make us proud. I know that I used to be proud of my fancied superiority.”

“Used!” repeated Caroline, ironically. “But to be sure, there is no one to exhibit to now.”

“The less temptation,” said Grace, with a good-humoured laugh.

“But I do not think that Grace is proud,” exclaimed Phebe. “I am sure she helps me a great deal.”

“I wish that I could help you more, and

Caroline too, if she would let me, if she would trust me; but I know that I do not deserve it," added she, meekly.

Caroline was touched with that humility before which her coldness and caution had long been giving way; while affection and reverence stood ready to take the place of watchfulness and suspicion.

"O my dear cousin! I shall be so glad, so thankful, if you will help me," exclaimed she; "for you know twice as much as I do."

"You may not find me so skilful as you think."

"I fear I shall be but a dull pupil," said Caroline, "and tire your patience sadly, as I do that of aunt Alice."

"Never mind. I promise not to scold; and will give you leave to turn me away without my wages the first time that I am tempted to break my word."

"But we have not settled what your wages are to be yet."

"The love and confidence of my dear cousin!" said Grace, looking pleadingly into her face.

"O Grace! they are yours already;" and Caroline flung her arms about her neck, and kissed her fondly over and over again.

"No, no," said Grace, while she affectionately returned her caresses; "you are paying me what I have not earned. But where shall we begin?"

"Begin to love one another?" asked Phebe, archly.

"That was begun a long time ago," replied her sister. "But you must bear with me, Grace, for I am not one to show what I feel; and have frequently, I fear, appeared even harsher than I really was, from my cold silence."

"We shall know and trust one another better for the future," replied Grace.

It was arranged that they should begin that very morning, and set apart a certain time every day for the diligent practice of music and drawing, in both of which accomplishments Caroline, by her persevering industry, soon surpassed her sister, and threatened, as Grace smilingly told her, to leave her nothing more to teach. If she was dull and slow, her young instructress proved kind and patient; and the harmony of their mutual affection kept pace with Caroline's increasing knowledge.

Robert performed his promise of writing to Grace, and his letter was full of encouragement. He liked Walter very much, and Mr. Howard still more; speaking of the latter as a cheerful and consistent Christian, who en-

deavoured to act up to his own profession, and make every one as happy as himself. "I sometimes think," added Robert, in his letter, "to use what would be the language of my cousin Grace, that my coming here was mercifully ordered in God's providence. Mr. Howard tries earnestly to sow the good seed, but the soil as yet is hard and unproductive, bringing forth nothing but tares. Pray for me, Grace."

Mrs. Harrington also received a letter in due time from her husband, announcing his safe arrival and unbroken health. It was written in a spirit of hopefulness, which soothed and animated her. Aunt Alice fancied that she could detect something of a faith awakened by sorrow, and strengthened and purified amidst trial, that soared above all else. We are very apt to fancy what we wish.

When the long winter evenings came, Miss Vernon used to read aloud to the rest while they worked, taking care to choose some book which was instructive as well as amusing, and not even forgetting little Willie in her selection; or else the girls played duets, or sang some simple home-melody, for there was no rivalry now between them. Sometimes Grace would say at the close of one of these pleasant evenings—(and they always closed with prayer)—

“O cousin! is not this better than going to dances and pleasure parties?” And no one contradicted her, not even Mrs. Harrington, who felt that if her husband were only with her, she should have no wish beyond that charmed circle, and almost wondered how she could have left it and him so often as she had done. Phebe laughingly declared that it was of no use to wish for impossibilities, and that contentment was the very wisest plan under the present circumstances: but it was astonishing how easy she found it to be contented, and how little she really missed those worldly pleasures to which her young heart had once clung so fondly, and how soon she discovered higher and purer ones in the love of friends and home.

The poor are everywhere; and Grace had only to look around her, assisted by the judicious advices of Miss Vernon, to find suitable objects for the exercise of her charity; for those who have once tasted the sweetness of benevolence are ever afterwards active in its exercise. Either Caroline or Phebe usually accompanied her in her visits: and many a valuable lesson was learned by them in the chamber of sickness and death. They likewise assisted in cutting out and making things for the poor; and they were surprised to find how much real good may be effected by such

trifling sums as they had hitherto thoughtlessly expended in the purchase of many a luxury for which they had not even a use.

“ Oh, if ever father should be rich again,” said Phebe upon one occasion, “ how differently I will behave !”

“ If not, you can give your time and kind words,” replied Grace ; “ and I have observed that you have a cheerful manner in speaking to poor people, and a quick and active way in assisting them, which is often quite as valuable as money. I was thinking to-day that I talk and you act.”

“ But I cannot talk as you do, Grace. I wish I could.”

“ And I cannot act as you do, Phebe ; but am oftentimes awkward and helpless, while you are quick and helpful.”

“ Then we must assist one another. I am sure I am glad to be able to do something, if it is only to hold a babe, or warm a little gruel.”

“ And I,” said Caroline, “ neither talk nor act.”

“ But then you work, dear cousin. How neatly and quickly you made the caps and frocks for poor Mrs. Brown’s children ; and how well they fitted ! Did they not, Phebe ?”

“ Yes, admirably. And I dislike work ; while Grace cannot sit to it for a long time

together ; so we are all useful in our different ways."

"Even little Willie," added Grace, "could weed and take care of widow Graham's garden, when she was so ill. The weakest among us may do something to show their love and gratitude to God our Saviour."

"I am afraid," said Phebe, "that all I do is to please myself, and because I like to do it, and feel gratified by the thanks and blessings which I receive."

"We want a higher motive than this, my dear Phebe, to sustain us, should we meet with unthankfulness and ingratitude. We need the recollection of Him who has borne so long with us, to enable us to bear with and pity one another. Although I do not always remember to think thus ; for, as we read the other day, it is very possible to hold a lamp to others without moving ourselves."

"But you do move. Witness poor Ann Harvey, for example."

"At the best," said Grace, pointing smilingly to her crutch, "I can but limp;" for Grace could allude to her lameness now, and even with a smile.

At this moment Miss Vernon called them to go out with her, and the conversation dropped.

CHAPTER XXII.

SIR Charles Medwin had called upon the Harringtons immediately on his return to England, and kindly repeated the offer which Mr. Harrington had made to Grace in his name, assuring her of the pleasure it would give him and his daughters to receive her as a member of his family, at least for the present. Grace thanked him, but firmly refused to leave her aunt ; and the weak state of her health rendering quiet and country air desirable, Sir Charles did not press the subject. Repeated invitations to visit them had, however, arrived from time to time, which something had hitherto invariably happened to prevent her from accepting ; until at length a day was fixed for her to spend with Caroline and Phebe at Coombe Park, (the name of Sir Charles Medwin's country seat,) and his carriage was sent to take them at an early hour. Grace felt unusually well, and they all enjoyed their pleasant drive exceedingly.

“How delightful it must be to keep one’s carriage!” observed Caroline, as she leaned back in luxurious ease.

“I should like walking much better, if I could walk like other people,” said Grace. And then checking the murmuring sigh that involuntarily arose, she added with a smile, “but then, we must not wish for impossibilities, but try and be content with what we have.”

“What a beautiful place!” exclaimed Phebe, as they drove up the long avenue of trees, and came suddenly in front of the house, which was certainly a magnificent-looking building. “O Grace! how could you refuse to live here?”

Her cousin was prevented from replying, by the carriage drawing up before the entrance hall. Sir Charles Medwin came forward immediately, and, lifting her gently out, led her into the drawing-room, followed by Caroline and Phebe, whom he presented successively to his daughters. For once in her life, Grace found herself to be the person of most consequence, while her cousins were comparatively cast into the shade.

Having had the misfortune to lose her mother at an early age, the eldest daughter of Sir Charles Medwin presided over his establishment, and was evidently regarded with more of

awe than love by her younger brothers and sisters. Emily, the next eldest, a lively, good-humoured girl, took quite a liking to Grace, to whom she volunteered to show the house and grounds. Grace was particularly struck with the latter, and also with the large, old-fashioned library and the picture gallery; and, notwithstanding the weariness which she felt from going up and down stairs and through many passages and corridors, would fain have lingered much longer than it suited the taste of her companion. She was not sorry, nevertheless, when every thing had been seen and admired, to rest herself in the large easy chair in Emily's dressing-room; where she listened patiently, but with an aching head and wandering thoughts, to her animated description of the gayeties of the city, and of all that they intended to do next season, when her eldest sister was to go into company. "I wish that you could be with us," said she; "you would enjoy it so much."

"Thank you," replied Grace; "but I do not think that I should."

"That is because you have never tried. And you will have no opportunity of trying, if you remain with Mrs. Harrington."

"But I do not want to try," said Grace, laughingly.

“And do you really intend to stay there for ever?”

“I hope so.”

“Father says that they have only a little cottage to live in, not much larger than our lodge.”

“It is not very large, to be sure,” replied Grace.

“You must be buried alive.”

“No, I am very happy.”

“Do you not think that you would be much happier here, living with us? To be sure, my eldest sister is somewhat dictatorial at times, but she would never dream of dictating to you; and, for my part, I would do all I could to make you comfortable, and it would be quite a delight to me to have some one to speak to.”

“You are very kind,” said Grace; “but it was my poor father’s wish, as well as my own, that I should reside with my aunt.”

“He did not know that Mr. Harrington would lose all his property, and every thing become so changed.”

“A fresh reason for my not deserting them in their adversity,” replied Grace.

“Father was right in saying that you were a strange girl,” observed her companion, after a pause.

“Did he say so?”

“I suppose I ought not to have mentioned it; but there is no harm. You are a great favourite of his, let me tell you; only he thinks it a pity, with your fortune, that you should not have an opportunity of seeing more of the world.”

“I am quite content as it is,” replied Grace, with a smile: and, the dinner-bell ringing at that moment, the conversation ended. Grace thought her companion very kind and good-natured, and Emily pitied her for her ignorance, and was half-vexed at the obstinacy which made her persist in remaining in it.

Notwithstanding Miss Medwin’s polite attention to her guests, the day wore heavily away. After tea, Grace was requested to play, but she declined; upon which Caroline took her place, and acquitted herself to the great satisfaction of her young instructress. Grace had never felt half that sincere pleasure in listening to her own praises that she now did in the commendation which was bestowed upon her cousin’s performance. Phebe afterwards played a short piece very carefully; but Grace could not be prevailed upon to play at all.

“Perhaps you cannot play,” said Emily, abruptly.

“Yes, she can,” interrupted Phebe; “it was she who taught Caroline and myself. I never heard any one play better than Grace.”

“O Phebe!” exclaimed her cousin laughingly, “you should not say that.”

“Why not, when it is the truth?”

“Will you not oblige us this evening, my dear?” said Sir Charles.

Grace excused herself, on the ground of fatigue; and as she looked pale and tired, he did not insist upon it.

“Pray, forgive me,” said Emily, colouring; “I spoke without thought.”

“No unusual thing,” observed her father, smiling and patting her flushed cheek.

“I judged you from myself,” continued Emily, in a whisper. “I am quite sure that if I could play well, I should not require much persuasion, but be rather glad of any opportunity of showing my skill.”

“So I thought once,” replied Grace; and then she hesitated.

“Well, and now?”

Just at that moment the carriage was announced, and as it was already late they arose at once to depart.

“I hope we shall meet again,” whispered Emily, “and that you will change your mind

and come and live here. I should like you for a companion very much."

Sir Charles also observed that he trusted this would not be her last visit to Coombe Park, even if they were content with a mere visit. Grace thanked them both; and having shaken hands with Miss Medwin and the rest of the family, was glad enough to find herself quietly seated by her cousins, and on their road homeward.

"What a long day this has been!" exclaimed Phebe.

"Yes, very," replied her sister. "And yet I think that Miss Medwin meant to be kind and agreeable; it is only the odd way she has of showing it."

"Defend me from such ways!" exclaimed Phebe, laughing. "I liked her sister Emily much better. Did not you, Grace?"

"Yes, Emily's manners are certainly more pleasing; but I would not exchange my own dear cousins for either of them." And Grace put an arm round each, and rested her head wearily upon Caroline's shoulder.

"How was it that you would not play to-night, Grace?" asked Caroline, after a pause: "In spite of what Phebe said, both Miss Medwin and Sir Charles looked as if they really did

not believe that you could. You are generally so willing, and play so much better than I do."

"Your last argument was the very cause of Grace's refusal," said Phebe. "Am I not right, my dear cousin?"

"Partly," replied Grace, blushing; "but it would also have added to my weariness."

"O Grace! how changed you are!" exclaimed Caroline.

Grace felt a deep thankfulness that found no vent in words; but its silent language was still and ever—"All glory be to God, through Jesus Christ: for it is he that worketh all good in us by his Holy Spirit."



CHAPTER XXIII.

THE long winter passed away; and it did not seem so very long, after all. And now the beautiful spring came again; and the cousins were very happy, walking together in the green fields and woods, or watching and tending the flowers which they had planted. They were all the happier that they had learned not to neglect duty for pleasure; so that pleasure, when it came, came with a double zest.

Grace, although still delicate, appeared to have gained strength; at any rate she was not worse, and she never complained. She never told any one how frequently it happened that she could not lie down because of the violent and suffocating pain in her heart, nor uttered even a moan for fear of awakening Phebe; or how often she used to sit up in bed watching the stars, and repeating hymns or texts of Scripture, to make herself forget the pain, until morning dawned. Miss Vernon did not know this, although she saw at times that Grace seemed pale and weary. She knew that the poor girl could never expect to be very strong,

and thanked God who had given her such a sweet source of consolation in his dear Son, praying that he would yet be pleased to make use of this feeble instrument for the good of others and his own glory. Her fears for the life of Grace had passed away; and she rejoiced to see her so useful and happy, and going on from strength to strength in the fear of God and love of her Redeemer.

Robert came home to spend a few days, and a very happy visit it was for all, but more especially to Grace; for it was to her alone that he found courage to open his heart, and tell of the change that had come over it, and of the new hopes and wishes and aspirations with which it was filled, and exclaim, in the language of the Psalmist, "O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together."

How natural it is, when we are first brought to the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus, and made to see our own sinfulness and great need of an atonement, as well as the gracious salvation provided for our need, to feel as if we could never do enough to show our love and gratitude towards that Divine Redeemer who has done so much for us; and to be filled with plans of usefulness, and an intense longing to consecrate all we are and all we have to his ser-

vice! Moved by this constraining influence, and encouraged, perhaps, by the example and precepts of his friend, Mr. Howard, Robert communicated to Grace his earnest wish (if his father made no objection) to be a minister of the gospel, and devote his time and talents henceforth to the glory of his Saviour. This was indeed joyful and unexpected tidings for her. How she longed, how she wondered, whether she should ever hear him preach!

“To be sure you will; that is, if my father consents, and if—if that happy day should ever arrive—”

“Yes, there are a great many *ifs*,” said Grace: “but God’s will be done. Oh, what a privilege to be permitted to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ! To be able to speak of him and of all that he has done; and encourage and invite others to come to him also, that they may have rest. Do you not feel this, my dear cousin?”

“Indeed I do, Grace; and how unworthy I am to take his name upon my lips.”

“It is that feeling which makes us love the Saviour so much. I hope I shall live to see you a minister of Christ, Robert.”

“Live—to be sure you will.”

“I hope so,” repeated Grace. “O Robert!

there was a time when I prayed to die; but I should like to live now, if it please God. I have so many schemes, and I am so happy, so doubly happy, since you have told me about this; but his will be done. Forgive me, Robert; I am very foolish:" and she leaned her head upon his shoulder and wept.

Every one missed Robert, when he went back again, but no one so much as Grace; and yet her heart was filled with joy and thankfulness when she thought of him. His sisters were neither vexed nor envious at the attention which he had paid her, for they remembered that he owed every thing to her, and thought it only natural; and now that he was gone, they endeavoured by their redoubled kindness to make her forget his absence.

A few days afterwards, Mrs. Harrington received a letter from her husband, informing her that he had succeeded even beyond his most sanguine expectations in arranging the concerns which had called him to India, and trusted before long to be able to return home in circumstances to make a satisfactory settlement of his affairs. "May God grant that our trials may be blessed to us," wrote Mr. Harrington, "and become the means of drawing us nearer to him, and making us still dearer to one an-

other." He mentioned all by name with the utmost affection; and requested that his dear girls would continue to practise their music for his especial benefit, but on no account to think of leaving home, as he had good reason to hope that there might not be any necessity for it; and he should be disappointed not to find them all residing together—a family of love—upon his return.

What rejoicing there was when this letter was read! How fast did the fond mother's tears fall upon the paper as she sat down at once to write and make Robert a participator in their happiness; and how often she smiled, and brushed them away! But it was of no use; and putting the pen into the hand of Grace, she left to her the pleasant task of finishing this strangely-blotted epistle. How cherished that letter was in after-years!

When the letter was written, Grace and Phebe went together to put it in the post-office; for it was a busy day at the cottage, and their one domestic could be ill spared. Willie asked permission to accompany them, but Caroline could not be persuaded to leave her mother's side; and they left them still sitting together and reading the letter once and again: while Miss Vernon looked on, and worked and listened,

and put in a little word now and then, which led them gently to see and acknowledge the true source of all their comfort and happiness.

It was a bright, sunny day; but the cousins could talk and think of nothing but Mr. Harrington's return, while Willie ran gayly by their side, gathering nosegays of wild flowers to decorate the cottage in celebration of the joyful news. They left the letter; and then Willie proposed their returning a different road, by the edge of a little wood, where he knew that the sweetest flowers were always to be found. It was a quarter of a mile further round; but, as Phebe said, he should do as he pleased on that happy day. Their way to this woodside walk was over a small wooden bridge, which crossed a clear, rapid stream, and a very pleasant way it was in the summer time; but on approaching it they found the bridge boarded up, so as to prevent any one from passing, and a notice erected declaring it to be dangerous to cross.

"What a pity!" exclaimed Willie, with a disappointed air. "And after all there does not seem to be very much the matter with it; and I have no doubt but that it would bear my weight."

"How can you talk so foolishly!" replied his sister.

"Never mind, Willie," said Grace, gently; "the flowers that you have will do very well, and I will help you to arrange and make the most of them."

The boy followed her a few steps.

"If I had but a bunch of those beautiful blue violets which I saw the other day!" thought he: "and they are only just across the bridge; I could easily creep under the boards, and come back again, if it is really unsafe. I have a great mind to try, now that they are talking so earnestly about father. I could be there and back before they missed me; and aunt Alice is so fond of violets."

Phebe and her cousin were still conversing together on the one theme which occupied both their minds, when they were suddenly aroused by a wild scream, and upon looking round, Willie was nowhere to be seen. Phebe wrung her hands, and pointed to the broken bridge.

"He has fallen in! He is lost!" exclaimed she. "O Willie, Willie!"

"No, no!" said Grace, who had now reached the edge of the stream. "I see him clinging to one of the timbers. Run, Phebe, as fast as you can for help; we may save him!"

Phebe darted off like an arrow ; while Grace, creeping, as Willie had done before, beneath the boards which had been placed across to stop up the entrance, advanced cautiously on her hands and knees, until she came near enough for Willie to hear the sound of her voice, speaking gently and encouragingly to him, and entreating him to hold on as long as he could, and assuring him that help was at hand. At first, the terror of the affrighted child prevented him from distinguishing her words, and he called wildly upon her to save him.

“I cannot save you, Willie ; but I will pray to God to save you, and with him nothing is impossible.”

“Do not go away, cousin Grace !”

“No, I will stay near you :” and retaining her uncomfortable position with some danger as well as difficulty, she continued to speak kindly and soothingly to the little fellow. But the time seemed very long ; and presently Willie cried out suddenly that he was cold and giddy, and that every thing appeared to be going round and round.

“O Willie, Willie ! if you could but hold on for a few moments longer ! I think I see the boat coming. Do try ! Only a moment, Willie dear. Yes, it is the boat ! Only a moment more, and you will be saved !”

Her voice, as she spoke, seemed to Willie to go a long way off, so that he could not hear what she said; while his cold fingers gradually relaxed their hold, and he fell into the stream.

Soon, however, he rose again to the surface of the water; and the boat having by this time approached near enough, he was drawn in without difficulty, and conveyed to the nearest residence. All hastened to the place where the boat had landed. Willie was already conscious, and the active efforts of the good people, who had been summoned to the scene, soon restored him to his usual health, except the effects of the chill and fright.

Grace now crept back from her dangerous position; and, upon rejoining her cousin, he knew Grace the moment she entered, and stretched out his hands towards her with a faint smile.

“O Grace!” whispered he, “forgive me; pray forgive me.”

“Poor child,” said she, kissing him fondly; “may God forgive you, and make this day a warning to you for life!”

Grace remained with him while Phebe returned home, in order to procure some dry clothing; and she took that opportunity of speaking to him seriously and affectionately

upon what had occurred, and teaching him to see the hand of God in his merciful preservation.

We will not attempt to describe the feelings of Mrs. Harrington when she clasped him once more in her arms. Our readers may be sure that the boatman and his companions were not forgotten.



CHAPTER XXIV.

THAT evening, nothing else was talked about but Willie's escape; and it was in vain that the fond mother sought to mingle a single word of chiding with her affectionate caresses. But her very love for him was a powerful rebuke to the heedless boy; and he voluntarily and repeatedly promised never again to be so rash and disobedient. Aunt Alice gently reminded him to be sure and ask God to help him to keep these good resolutions, for that without his help they would be all in vain.

"How quickly you must have gone, Phebe," said Grace; "and yet how long it seemed. How providentially it happened that we were together."

"Yes, I should never have thought of the boat but for you."

"And I am sure," said Willie, "that I should never have been able to hold on so long, if it had not been for my cousin speaking to me so kindly and cheerfully."

"God took care of us all," said Grace.

That night, Mrs. Harrington kissed Grace with much affection, calling her "her own dear child." Miss Vernon, who had been very anxious about her ever since the accident happened, and was thankful to see her looking so well and cheerful, followed her sister's example, with even more than her usual tenderness. Caroline accompanied her cousin and Phebe up-stairs, and asked to be permitted to join them that night in their reading, of which the latter had often told her. Grace willingly consented; and even after the chapter was finished they remained talking over it together.

"How beautiful," said Grace, "is the very name of Emmanuel—God with us! God with us always—at all times, and under all circumstances; especially with us in our sorrows, dangers and sufferings; God with us even to the end—Emmanuel in life and death."

"Beautiful indeed!" answered Caroline: "but I never thought of it before."

"O my dear cousins!" continued Grace, "I cannot tell you how strangely happy I feel to-night. I do not seem to have a thought, or a plan, or even a wish for myself. And I hope I never shall have again, for God knows what is best for all of us; and it is sweet to leave every thing to him. Do you remember that

beautiful hymn which was sung in church last Sunday? It has been in my mind ever since.

‘I the chief of sinners am ;
But Jesus died for me.’

For me !” repeated Grace, with a happy smile, “even for me, and for all those who make him their trust.”

At this moment, Mrs. Harrington knocked gently at the door as she passed, and warned them of the lateness of the hour ; upon which Caroline kissed her sister and Grace in silence and with a full heart, and retired to her own chamber.

Phebe’s prayers were, as usual, soon said ; but her cousin seemed to have much to tell her heavenly Father and to thank Him for on that particular night ; and not liking to disturb her somewhat protracted devotions, Phebe closed her eyes and soon fell asleep. She awoke, as it seemed to her, a few moments afterwards ; and seeing Grace still kneeling by the bedside, (for it was a bright night,) ventured to ask her softly if she had not almost done ; but receiving no answer, she again fell asleep. The morning had begun to dawn before Phebe opened her eyes ; and Grace still kneeled by the bedside.

“Why, Grace ! my dear Grace !” exclaimed the startled girl, sitting up and calling her re-

peatedly by name. "And how cold you are!" added she, touching one of her hands: "I never felt any one so cold!" And then a sudden fear came over Phebe; and springing out of bed, she ran to call aunt Alice, who accompanied her back with a foreboding heart, and found Grace dead upon her knees, with her hands clasped, as though her spirit had passed away in the very act of prayer. The excitement of the previous day had, as Doctor Grenfield too surely predicted, caused her death!

When the first fearful shock had passed away, Caroline and Phebe remembered and repeated her last words, so full of joyful resignation and sweet trust. And when they called to mind how much she had suffered, and would in all probability have continued to suffer, together with her happy and entire faith in Jesus Christ her Saviour, they no longer sorrowed for her as those without hope, but comforted themselves with the assurance that, although she would never return to them, they, through faith in the same blessed Redeemer, might go to her, and to that beautiful land where "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain."

Every day her cousins missed and thought and spoke of Grace; and thus speaking, their

thoughts naturally turned to Him whom she had so loved and trusted, and ever sought to glorify. The poor also missed and blessed her; as did Mr. Harrington, when he once more rejoined his family circle, a changed and better man. But, above all, Robert missed and thought of her, especially when the cherished wish of his heart was accomplished years afterwards, and he was permitted to enter the sacred office.

It pleased God to bless the early death of Grace Dermott to those dear relatives whom she had so loved on earth; and it is with the humble and prayerful hope that her life and death may be also blessed to our young readers that this little history has been written. It may be that some who read it have suffered, or are suffering, as Grace once did; that they are even now labouring under bodily affliction and many painful infirmities, and bewailing their sad condition, not seeing the hand of love in every dispensation that befalls them. They may be aggravating and exaggerating, instead of patiently enduring the cross which it has pleased their heavenly Father to lay upon them. It is to such poor, unhappy, stricken ones that Christ says, "In me is thy help. Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and

I will give you rest." And it is for the consolation of such that this record is made; that they may learn to come unto Christ, as Grace did, and so find rest and peace—that peace which passeth all understanding.

Reader, whatever may be your present affliction or temptation, come unto Christ! He will enable you to bear all things, to believe all things, and to hope all things, trusting in him who is the Author and Finisher of our faith. Christ will love, and support, and comfort, and guide you while on earth, and afterwards receive you into glory!



